

Vanguard Studies of Soviet Russia

Soviet Trade Unions

By ROBERT W. ^{Williams}DUNN



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*To the sincere men and women of Russia who, despite
prison, exile, and death, burned out their
lives trying to attain freedom, peace,
and brotherhood for the
common people.*

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

ROBERT W. DUNN

Born in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, in 1895; A. B. Yale College, 1918; organizer and research director, Amalgamated Textile Workers of America, 1919-21; publicity director in Russia for American Friends Service Committee (Quakers) in connection with the famine, 1922-23; acting director American Civil Liberties Union, 1923; publicity for Russian-American Industrial Corporation, 1924; author of *American Foreign Investments*, *Company Unions*, *The Americanization of Labor*, and co-author, *The Labor Spy*; on technical and advisory staff of American Trade Union Delegation to Russia in 1927.

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE Russian Revolution startled a war-diseased world and ushered in the most daring political and economic experiment of the twentieth century. Considering the vast territory affected, the radical changes inaugurated, and the influence which has been and still is being exerted on international relations, there is probably no greater event in modern history, whether for good or evil. Most Americans forget that a decade has already passed since Lenin and his Communistic followers assumed the power. The period of rapid revolutionary change has gone. Russia is painstakingly, step by step, building something different, something unique, something whose final destination is unpredictable.

America has been a land of discovery from its foundation. Not only in the realm of scientific invention, but in first attaining the coveted North Pole and in exploring other unknown areas of the world, Americans have given generously of life and treasure. Today we are uninformed about a great nation covering one-sixth of the land surface of the world. Russia is cut off by an Atlantic Ocean of prejudice, misunderstanding, and propaganda. We still maintain a rigid official quarantine about the Soviet Government. The result is ignorance frankly admitted by one "of the highest authorities in our Government," who declares this inevitable "in the absence of diplomatic relations." Judge Gary corroborated this verdict, "Like many other Americans, I am ignorant in regard to many of the

conditions which exist in Russia at the present time.”*

Every scientist realizes that ignorance is one of the most dangerous forces in the world today. No matter how good or how bad the Soviet system, we should know all about it. Instead, we have been ruled by propaganda and hearsay.

The fact is that for the past ten years the Bolshevik government has been operated on, dissected, and laid in its coffin amidst loud applause and rejoicing by distinguished orators in all parts of the world; yet today it is stronger, more stable, than ever before in its history and its leaders have been longer in power than any other ruling cabinet in the world. It is high time that we appraise this government as scientifically and impartially as possible, without indulging in violent epithets or questionable and controversial dogmas. Surely the world is not so abysmally ignorant that after ten years of the rule of the Soviet we cannot discover a common core of truth about Russia.

Whether the Communists are thought to be “dangerous enemies of society” or the “saviors of humanity,” the facts should be known before judgment is pronounced. No matter what our conviction, we have to admit that the Bolsheviks are hammering out a startling new mechanism in the field of political control. Their experiment deserves scientific study, not hostile armies; intelligent criticism, not damning epithets.

In the past, America has been flooded with propaganda of all shades. Dr. E. A. Ross dedicates his last volume on Russia “To my fellow-Americans who have become weary of being fed lies and propaganda about Russia.” In his chapter on the “Poison Gas Attack”

* *Current History*, February, 1926.

he lists forty-nine stories broadcast throughout America which have been proved totally false. Other writers have pointed out similar facts. Walter Lippman, Editor-in-Chief of *The New York World*, in his illuminating study of all Russian news which appeared in *The New York Times* in the early period of the Revolution, has proved the stupidity, inaccuracy, and falsehood of the "facts and fabrications" which have passed as news. Even those articles and books which have tried to deal honestly with the subject have usually been inadequate. They have either been too general or they have been specific but too brief to be of more than passing value. In all too many cases they are based on only a few weeks of observation in Russia by someone who did not know the native language.

The present series is designed to meet the need for reliable, accurate information on the major aspects of present-day Russia. We have tried to make it as scientifically accurate as is possible in the treatment of contemporary phenomena. It has been our aim in selecting each author to choose someone who because of previous experience and training was peculiarly well qualified as an authority on the particular subject to which he was assigned. In every case we have chosen those who either have made a prolonged stay in Russia, actually writing their volumes while in the country, or those who have made a special trip to Russia to secure the facts about which they write. We have tried to make the series inclusive, covering the more important aspects of the many-sided developments in Russia. Each volume is devoted to one major subject alone. People want detailed, accurate facts in readable form. Here they can be found, ranging all the way from an

analysis of the governmental machinery to the school system. Within this series some repetition has been inevitable. The editor believes that this is distinctly desirable since each author expounds his subject in his own way, with an emphasis original to him and in the light of his own data. No effort has been made to eliminate contradictions, yet they are surprisingly few. Where the testimony of all is unanimous, the conclusions reached are overwhelmingly strong. Where differences exist, they should stimulate the reader to weigh the evidence even more carefully.

It is probably too much to hope that propaganda organizations will not endeavor to discredit any such genuine effort to arrive at the truth. Perhaps it is sufficient to say in refutation that no similar attempt to secure the facts about Russia from trained experts has yet been made in America or elsewhere, so far as the writer is aware. There is scant ground for intelligent criticism unless similar scientific studies have been made with conflicting results; even the time alone can proclaim the final truth. No sincere and unprejudiced scientist will deplore an effort to study and describe what has happened in the first experiment the world has ever seen in applied communism, even if mistakes have been made in the analysis.

These volumes on the whole not only contain the most valuable data so far available, but they will probably remain of permanent worth. In the future no real historian endeavoring to master the facts about the great political upheaval in Russia will care to ignore them. Is Russia the most tyrannical dictatorship of bloody despots that the world has ever seen? Is Russia the first step in the building of a new world order whose keynote will be industrial democracy? We do

not pretend to give here the final judgment of history, but we do claim to have made a sincere effort to portray the facts.

Thanks are due to the authors who have so painstakingly sought to present the truth as they found it, to the publishers for their assistance in making this a notable and usable series, and to all those whose labor, whether by hand or brain, has helped to give these volumes to the American public.

JEROME DAVIS,
Yale University.

PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is to provide an introductory picture of the trade unions in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. A country which has as its official motto "Proletarians of All Countries, Unite!" and which is avowedly a Workers' and Peasants' regime, would be expected to have powerful labor unions.

What do the workers do for themselves through these labor associations? How do these differ from trade unions in other lands? Do they have strikes? What is their relation to the government and to the Communists? These are some of the questions I have tried to answer in this volume.

My investigations of Russian unions cover one trip to the Soviet Union in 1922-23, two months out of thirteen being spent in the industrial centers; and another visit of ten weeks, in the summer of 1927, devoted almost exclusively to securing data on the trade unions.

The workers' associations are, without question, among the most important social forces in this vast land. From the mountains of Daghestan to the Khirgiz steppes and the suburbs of Leningrad, where the Revolution began in 1917, workers of every trade, craft and industry are bound together in the *professionalniye so-yuzie*, or trade unions. Farm laborers and shepherds, teachers and doctors, miners and engineers, house maids and cooks, metal workers and railwaymen—all carry the books of their unions and participate in the daily work

of this new social organism. Through it they learn, for the first time, to "do things together." Through it they develop a sense of social-mindedness, of power and responsibility. They organize their daily life around their work-place and their union. And the organization, as one Russian leader has expressed it, "looks after its members from the cradle to the grave."

In this necessarily compressed account, I have tried to sketch the unions as they are today, passing over briefly what they were before, and omitting any extended prophecies as to what they may be in the future. This much is clear, however, concerning the unions as they now operate. They are the indispensable organs of the working class in defending the privileges gained through the Revolution. How these defenses are constructed and what are the more positive functions of the unions under Soviet rule, it is the purpose of this book to describe.

Whether a study of the Russian unions has any value for the American reader, the facts themselves can answer. One observation, however, may be made. While Russian delegations are coming to America to study our farms, our bridges, our dredging machinery, our oil wells and our poultry raising, we have heard of no delegations of Russian unionists coming to inquire into our trade union structure and methods. Perhaps the Russians have something to learn from American unionism. Perhaps the American unions may profit by a study of the labor organizations of the U. S. S. R. This book does nothing more than present the facts and give something of the atmosphere surrounding the worker's life in the Soviet Union.

Most of the figures that appear in these pages are, naturally, taken from Soviet sources. Not only were

the official reports and proceedings of the unions examined, but literally hundreds of handbooks, instruction pamphlets and much of the more popular literature which acquaints the rank and file with the first principles and duties of unionism. There seems to be much more of this type of material there than in other countries. For example, there are probably a dozen separate pamphlets dealing with the work of the "factory committee," giving practical instructions concerning the functions of the committee members, and several scores of such handy, simply-written illustrated booklets, on the educational work of the unions. All of this material, in the Russian language, as well as innumerable interviews and visits to factories and union offices and workers' homes, provide the basis for the statements made in this volume.

I wish to express my appreciation for the help given me in the collection of materials by Comrades Chaika, Golofkin, Antonyuk, Yarros, Yaglom, Markov, Melnechansky, Vaksov, Yarotsky, Rashin, Ashkenudze, Fin, Sugar, Belenki and others. All have painstakingly answered questions and furnished publications about the unions with which they are associated. I am in debt also to Paul H. Douglas for suggestions, and to my wife, Stanislawa Piotrowska, for invaluable services as interpreter and translator. I also wish to thank Anna Rochester and Grace Hutchins for corrections, and Barbara Gail and Jack Hardy for preparing the index. There are scores of rank and file trade union workers throughout the Soviet Union who should also be remembered as having contributed most generously of their time and information to this study.

ROBERT W. DUNN.

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SOVIET TRADE UNIONS

CHAPTER I

FIRST GLIMPSES

TRADE unions may flourish in Moscow, but what happens in the provinces? This is the question one is likely to be asked on returning from a trip to the Soviet Union. With this query in mind I decided to visit a small provincial city nearly a thousand miles from the "Center".

I had been in similar cities before—in Samara during the Great Hunger of 1921-22, in Orenburg on the edge of Asia, in Minsk, the Capital of White Russia, and in various textile towns not more than a hundred miles from Moscow. But I had never visited these places for the specific purpose of inquiring into their trade union life. My object now was to find a city, preferably outside the boundaries of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic, in one of the five other republics that make up the vast territory of the Soviet Union, or the U. S. S. R. (Union of Socialist Soviet Republics). I chose the Ukraine and a city named Vinnitsa not too far removed from the Polish border, a town with no heavy industries and no large plants—a district capital town with some brick plants, machine shops and many government and commercial institutions, in the heart of a rich farming belt. My much-thumbed *Guide to the Soviet Union* puts it on the railroad line running be-

tween Kiev and Odessa, and credits it with 51,000 inhabitants, a "People's Museum" and an "Agricultural Museum". It says nothing about trade unions.

Arriving in this city I was not a diplomatic guest with credentials from the Kremlin. In fact, I had not yet been in Moscow. I had nothing but an American passport and a competent interpreter. I had no introductions. No one met me at the station with the keys to the city. It was a black, rainy midnight in early July. We took a *drosbky* (a one horse carriage), and clattered over the cobbles to the former home of my interpreter. What followed that night could be fittingly recorded in a study of the family in Soviet Russia, but not in a volume dealing with trade unions.

The day following our arrival we walked across the temporary bridge spanning the river Bug (the Poles in their retreat from the Ukraine had blown up the old one). Looking back from the other side towards the roofs of the city on the steep slope of a hill, we noticed a tall and freshly painted building, more dominating than the Greek Orthodox Church itself. This we discovered, upon inquiry, was formerly the Hotel Savoy, now the "Palace of Labor", the home of the unions. We concluded that the local unions must have done very well by the Revolution, for they had taken over the only six-story structure in the place, a building as good as any in town, including those occupied by the city soviet and the theatre.

We returned to the city, climbed the hill and approached this union headquarters at the junction of the two main streets. What we found there we discovered later was fairly typical of Labor Palaces throughout the Soviet Union. With some notable exceptions, (the miners' union in the Donetz Basin of the Ukraine is

now building twelve large new labor temples), most of them have not been newly built, but are rather hotels, business blocks and young ladies' finishing schools converted into union centers of operation.

Downstairs, on the wall of the lobby, was a directory of the various *okrug* (district) unions. People hurried in and out of the entrance, or stood in small groups talking in the corridor or on the steps. We found that the office of the man we probably ought to see, the president of the District Council of Trade Unions, was on the top floor. The elevator took us to his door. We opened it and walked in. No secretary intervened to ask us our business. The president himself, Comrade Chaika, nodded to us from his desk at the window and told us to be seated while he finished talking over some plans with the secretary of the district sugar workers' union. After that he heard a complaint about housing from a worker—a Communist apparently—who had been ousted from his room because he had not complied with the housing law which, we learned right there, seemed to be no respecter of persons even of those carrying red cards. Chaika explained to this wayward comrade that he himself had been unable to secure an apartment even though he had been in the city several months. He had, he told his fellow party member, lived with a friend while he waited his turn on the local housing list. Housing in cities which have become new capitals of districts since the Revolution is always worse than in cities like Kiev and Leningrad where the personnel that goes with state administration has been moved to another city.

Disposing of these two matters, Chaika turned to us and expressed a hospitable interest in our desire to see something of the unions in his district. He told us

that so far as he knew we were the first Americans, or foreigners of any kind, who had stopped off to look at his city. He gave us no credentials and seemed to take us at our face value, something that one had not expected in a town so close to the Polish border. "Go around and look at things as you come to them", he said as he handed us some printed reports. "Look at our Palace of Labor here, our workers' clubs and the various institutions used by trade unionists. Then come back and fire your questions at me." He promised after that to take us to a workers' Rest Home and a factory meeting. We could also, if we cared to, drop in at the meeting of their district trades council to be held the following Thursday evening.

We thanked him and went out to look over the former Hotel Savoy. Every room housed some busy trade union branch, some department of union life—the offices of the twenty-three unions of the district as well as the local trades council, the district social insurance department with union appointees in charge of it, a dining room, the workers' student section, the educational department, a library, committee rooms and a meeting hall. We found union members coming to this building in connection with all sorts of matters touching their daily lives—rents, jobs, dues, insurance, vacation allowances, cooperatives, doctors' permits, transportation, Rest Home recommendations, scholarships and the scores of needs and benefits that are somehow related to union membership in the U. S. S. R.

After visiting the district headquarters of the metal workers, the teachers, the public health workers, and talking to many union leaders, we inspected some local institutions where union members always receive first, and sometimes exclusive, consideration—the polyclinics,

the special tuberculosis dispensary, the children's gardens and nurseries (established, for example, by the sugar workers' union in the private garden of a former merchant), the shooting ranges of the agricultural workers' union, the labor employment exchange, the Lenin theatre, the clubs of the unions each with its movie, loud speaker and library. We found that the unions had become an accepted and integral part of the life of the people affecting every phase of their work and their recreational activity.

WHY THEY JOIN

Interviewing the responsible heads of the unions, and their allied institutions, was not enough. We talked with dozens of members whom we met in their homes as well as in theatres and clubs. We asked them what they thought of unions. We asked non-members the same question. We found former land owners' wives and old regime intelligentsia who described, not unsympathetically, the difference between the structural organization of American and Russian unions. We found one old monarchist general who eagerly pointed out certain benefits his daughter receives today because she is a union member. Of course we found those who grumbled and complained at certain favors enjoyed by unionists. These were chiefly the former rich who were too old to do any useful work and hence not able to join a union themselves. Or they were persons who for other reasons are not permitted to carry a union book. The official list of these includes members of the former police and secret service, priests and ecclesiastical officials, superintendents, agents and proprietors of private businesses and those with administrative posts which entail the right to hire and fire in private enterprises. Prac-

tically anyone else who works with hand or brain can belong to the union. This includes the "boss" himself in the government factories. Even the sons of czarist officers and others who might naturally be looked upon with some suspicion by the workers are admitted without discrimination. And we noticed that they take full advantage of the union benefits, as do their wives and families.

We discovered that anyone who works for hire may join a union irrespective of political opinion, race, creed, color, sex or occupation. We could find no record here of expulsion of workers from the unions for political opinions, as happens occasionally in Europe and America. We asked some of those who were eligible to join why they were members of the union, what they "got out of it". A girl who worked in a government office replied: "You feel like an outcast if you don't. To feel 'out' of the group is not a pleasant feeling. To belong gives you a solid social status. The moral pressure is strong although there is no direct economic pressure. The membership is voluntary. But those who don't join miss a lot of things. For instance, you are not likely to get to a sanatorium when you are sick, or to a rest home or a summer resort when you are played out, unless you are in the union."

A young conductor on the local street car line answered: "I am a student at the workers' high school in the winter. My union sent me there. Non-unionists have no such opportunities. Then think of the dispensaries and hospitals, summer parks, clubs, playgrounds that we enjoy as union workers—without charge. I can't imagine getting half the enjoyment out of life if I were not a member."

The daughter of a high school principal under the

old regime now works in a local office. She gave a more individualistic reply: "When you're out of work you receive unemployment benefits and you have more chance to find a job if you're in the organization." This girl complained, however, that boys back from the Red Army and the more qualified technical workers always seemed to have the first pick of the positions. The less skilled union workers, if unemployed, always had more difficulty in getting placed.

A servant in a small soviet hotel told of interminable hours before the Revolution and of an eight-hour union shift now. She seemed hurt when we asked her if she received her annual two weeks vacation with pay. She takes all this for granted and tells us that, thanks to the hotel committee and the special committee for the protection of women's rights, these legally guaranteed benefits are always forthcoming. She also says, "I can't be fired without the consent of my local committee." Besides, think of the clubs and entertainments and classes we never had before. All these we have as members of the union." Incidentally, she assumes that workers in enlightened, cultured, modern, mechanized America must also have the same state social insurance benefits which workers have secured in the U. S. S. R. Though amazed at our comparatively high wage levels, she can scarcely believe us when we tell her how weak our unions are and how little social legislation there is in the United States.

In this way we talk to workers in many occupations. And as we talk we jot down the reasons they offer for belonging to unions. Some of these read as follows:

1. You participate actively in the building of the national industries, and thus in the construction of so-

cialism. (This from a more "conscious" worker in a metal shop.)

2. You have the free services of dental, medical and other dispensaries. The clinic may serve the entire working community but the union members have better hours assigned them, are given the first place in line if there are a large number waiting, and have other privileges such as free X-rays and examinations.

3. You pay less for all sorts of services. There are from twenty-five to sixty percent reductions to union members in connection with public bathhouses, ferry crossings, row boats on the Bug, moving pictures in the clubs, theatres, railroad excursions, bathing beaches, botanical gardens, museums, radio licenses and so on. The union book is a sort of passport permitting free entrance or reduced price tickets to all kinds of social affairs. Then take such a simple matter as registering at the "address bureau" when staying in a city for more than a few days. A trade union member pays 26 kopeks for registration service; a "non" pays two rubles, six kopeks, or eight times as much. In travelling, a union member always carries his book. It saves him some money and a good deal of inconvenience.

4. You have a better chance to get to a Rest Home, or a health resort in the Caucasus or the Crimea. Under the social insurance regulations, each union is entitled to so many free places from the government social insurance department. In addition, the more prosperous unions are able to engage more beds for their own members in these institutions.

5. In case of strikes the union member receives benefits out of strike funds. And if he has a complaint or grievance he naturally takes it to the committee in his

place of work, this committee, as we shall see, being the lowest organization of the union.

6. Credit at the consumers' cooperative of the city is given to union members up to one month's wages every three months.

7. Rent, electricity and other housing facilities are reduced in price and more accommodations provided for the union member. There are also reductions in certain ~~rates~~

8. The children of the unionist have more educational advantages in nurseries and children's homes and summer gardens, operated, in this city, for example, by the public health workers and by the soviet and commercial workers' union.

9. Clubs are exclusively for the union member and his family, and within those clubs, remember, are the best libraries, motion pictures, radio loud speakers, educational classes, entertainments and general social fellowship.

10. Unemployment is less of a threat to the union member. He is hired before the non-union man. Unemployment funds come partly out of special union funds. The unions have special unemployment bureaus that help the worker to find employment.

11. You receive free legal advice from the union concerning wages, property, working rights and all kinds of individual difficulties.

12. Physical culture and athletic activities are open to the young worker carrying a union card. The swimming club and the sports field in this city are run by a number of unions.

These were a few of the answers that came to the minds of the workers of Vinnitsa as we put the question

"Why do you belong?" to member after member. And we experienced the advantages of the union card ourselves when we went to the theatre on the half-price tickets of union members whose guests we were, when we accompanied them to workers' clubs or to concerts in the city park. The union ticket always meant some reduction, some advantage. But above all one felt that intangible social status it gives one to be a member of the union, a part of this new social force in Russian life.

THE REST HOME

Later we learned through a close-up view why the workers had talked so much about the advantages of the Rest Home. When we returned to ask him our questions one day, Comrade Chaika invited us to visit the one at Nemirov, a small town some 30 miles distant. We accepted. On a bright July morning, accompanied by Chaika, the head of the district social insurance department, and an organizer for the sugar workers, we motored over the old stone highroad built by Catherine the Great and kept in good repair by the Bolsheviki. We sped through lanes of great linden trees past endless stretches of golden wheat, till we came to Nemirov and a former noble lady's mansion, a formidable palace surrounded by great parks, now occupied by some three hundred workers who were there spending their two weeks vacation. They were all unionists chosen by the union doctor on the basis of their health needs, their economic condition and their union standing. We found them browning themselves on the lawn, resting in hammocks among the pine trees, swimming under a great waterfall, playing ball and other games. The establishment was as clean as any hospital, and probably as

well furnished, comfortable, orderly and spacious as it had been under the regime of the noble lady, only now serving several thousand workers every summer instead of a land-owner's family of three. And it was certainly not a "show place". We were the first foreigners who had ever visited there, they told us. But it was spick and span for inspection by anyone who might appear from the unions or the government. The workers were justly proud of it and delighted in showing their visitors every corner. Later we were to discover that the hundreds of Rest Homes throughout the Soviet Union are equally well suited for resting and recreating the Russian unionists.

After a bath, a dinner and a drink of *kvass* (a cider), we went on to another event that gave us further light on unionism in the Ukraine. We attended a Saturday afternoon general meeting at the Stepanovka sugar factory where Comrade Chaika was scheduled to deliver a speech on a topic that always holds the attention of Russian workers, no matter how far they may be removed from a railway line—the "international situation." It was an open air meeting under some silver birches in the quiet yard of the sugar factory, several miles from the nearest town. All the members of the factory committee sat at the speakers' table, and a lusty factory band played at odd moments before and after the speaking. The workers were out in force, sitting on the benches in their clean white shirts. Naturally they were full of curiosity about the Americans.

In the front row, calmly smoking a cigarette and apparently deeply intrested in Chaika's discussion of the conditions in China and the British diplomatic break with Soviet Russia was the factory manager, a *spets* (specialist) of the old days, a distinguished middle-aged

man who seemed to be on the best of terms with his assistant director, a Bolshevik, as well as with the factory committee. It was this engineer who not only showed us the factory, but who later took us through the factory theatre, the library and the reading room of the workers' club, explaining with genuine enthusiasm what the workers had done for themselves in the cultural field during the last few years.

At the Stepanovka factory, at the rest home on the estate of a rich landowner, as well as in the daily life of the workers in Vinnitsa, we felt the strong throb of the union. We began to appreciate something of the contrast in the workers' individual and collective life before and since the Revolution. But in order fully to understand this contrast one must know something of Russian trade union history—of what went before. This we shall try to sketch in the following chapter.

CHAPTER II

BEGINNINGS AND GROWTH OF THE UNIONS

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

THE Russian trade unions are comparatively young organizations. Capitalism got a very late start in the Russian Empire and the protective organizations of the workers were correspondingly late in making their appearance. Among the Russian trade unionists of today there are very few old workers who can share reminiscences about the early struggles of the unions as such. But you will find many who were active in the work of the Social Democratic Labor Party and who participated in spontaneous strikes before 1905 and in the difficult illegal political life of those days. If the Russian trade union leader has a "past," it will be largely a political rather than a union one. For the former was the dominant form of organization in the early days.

Beginning with the seventies and eighties of the last century the workers did resort to sporadic strikes. The leaders of these strikes were usually connected with some revolutionary party such as the Social Democrats. Such strikes, although often surprisingly widespread considering the small organization behind them, were usually crushed by the police and the leaders imprisoned or exiled to Siberia. There were thus strikes and struggles of the workers but not real unions. Mere member-

ship in an organization was a crime. Clause 318 of the Russian Criminal Code of 1874 read in part:

"Persons accused of belonging to societies having the aim of rousing hostility between employers and workers as well as provoking strikes are liable to imprisonment for eight months with deprivation of rights and property and exile to Siberia."

In spite of this, however, there were underground workers' organizations with a political leadership. They collected strike funds and were capable, under favorable conditions, of calling widespread strikes. The mere distribution of a leaflet by such a group often resulted in a city-wide strike, even though only a handful of workers were members of the secret organization. These strikes were frequently effective in forcing the government to pass some law slightly reducing the hours of work for women and children or in getting other legislative crumbs calculated to keep down discontent.

Although the government promptly suppressed any organization that resembled a union, it permitted, under rigid supervision, the existence of mutual aid societies, credit organizations, sick and death benefit societies and similarly named fraternal bodies. These organizations were intended to have no relation to the economic or political struggles of the masses, and, if they showed any suspicious activity, were immediately disbanded by the police. Such societies were particularly popular among the printing trades.

Mention should also be made of the "legal" labor organizations sponsored by the police to combat the subversive, revolutionary influence of underground radical groups. The purpose of these police unions was to

keep the attention of the working class centered on non-political and non-economic matters such as mutual aid and burial benefits. Unfortunately, however, from the point of view of the Czarist government, these bodies frequently became centers for economic demands and even for strikes, and although fostered by the police to offset the influence of revolutionary groups, they ended by taking part in the agitation leading to the attempted Revolution of 1905 and the labor outbreaks which accompanied it.

1905 AND AFTER

Real unions came into existence with the uprisings of 1905. They were formed in practically every large town and city in the empire. Organizations previously underground appeared on the surface. A wave of strikes, led in part by these unions, swept the country. The revolutionary parties took the leadership in these strikes and did their utmost to strengthen and build substantial unions, making them the organs of political agitation.

The first All-Russian Trade Union Conference, composed chiefly of delegates from Moscow unions, was held in that city in October, 1905. Organizations, no matter what their names, that were "directly or indirectly fighting capital" were represented at this conference. It organized a Moscow District Bureau and a Central Bureau for the calling of a second conference which was held in 1906. This conference, with representatives from more than ten cities, reported that some 200,000 workers had been organized. It went on record in favor of continuing to form bona fide bodies independent of police persuasion. It also advocated the "one shop, one

union" principle which was later to become the prevailing form of organization after 1917.

The Revolution of 1905 was drowned in blood and the labor union movement which had just gotten on its feet during the struggles was again driven underground and suffered the terrible vengeance of the monarchy. A period of severe repression set in. According to Losovsky, "The unions were prohibited from assisting strikers; they were closed down for attempting to intervene in the great strike movement; members of the executives were arrested and exiled to Siberia, funds were confiscated and books taken to the police stations; police were present at all meetings, which were closed down on the slightest pretext, and, very often, without any reason at all . . . the iron fist of the victorious reaction ruthlessly crushed the labor organizations at their birth".¹

The czarist police reported in 1907 that it had closed down one hundred and seven unions. Some of the reasons given for their suppression shed light on the conditions prevailing under the Romanoffs. Unions and workers' societies were closed by the police for, (1) Advocating strikes, (2) Participating in strikes, (3) Attacking employers in the press for discharging a union member, (4) Political unreliability of certain members of the society, (5) Participation of the members in political propaganda, (6) Distribution of revolutionary manifestos, (7) Discovery of socialist pamphlets in the dining room of a society, (8) A telegram to the second Duma promising to rise in its defense, (9) Opening of libraries without the permission of the police, (10) Passing resolutions for the celebration of the

¹ A. Losovsky, *Trade Unions in Soviet Russia*, p. 10.

First of May, (11) Greeting the Social Democrats in the Duma, (12) Convening general membership meetings without police permit, (13) Collecting money for unspecified purposes.

As a result of this systematic suppression by the police the union movement declined, and almost disappeared from sight during the years 1908 to 1911. But in 1912 and 1913, just before the outbreak of the World War, revolutionary and strike agitation became more intense. This wave of organization was met by the government and the employers with ruthless measures of repression. Spies and provocateurs unearthed the secret meeting places of the unions. Their members were discharged and blacklists were drawn up. Cossacks rode into picket lines and demonstrations just as they had in 1905. From 1914 on, soldiers stood over the workers in the shops to prevent any organization, especially among the industries manufacturing war materials. The unions were thus practically wiped out again and it is stated that there were not more than 1,500 members in what we would call real labor unions in all Russia in the winter of 1916-1917.

THE MARCH REVOLUTION

This was the condition of labor organization in Russia just before the Revolution of March, 1917, which led by the workers of Petrograd, overthrew the Czarist dynasty and set up a Provisional Government. But this government was made up of wealthy business men, Constitutional Democrats and one Socialist, Alexander Kerensky, as Minister of Justice. It failed to understand the economic significance of the Revolution and was mainly interested in a more vigorous prosecution

of the imperialist war. However, it was forced to grant the workers the right to strike and to organize. Consequently there quickly developed a great many unions as well as factory committees. The rise of these committees seems to have paralleled the growth of the soviets, or councils, which had previously been formed by the workers in the 1905 revolt.

Immediately after the March Revolution a Council of Trade Unions was formed in Moscow and another in Petrograd. These councils later cooperated in calling, in June, 1917, the Third All-Russian Trade Union Conference. This conference consisted of 247 delegates representing nearly 1,000 local unions and 51 central trades councils, embracing a total membership of about 1,500,000. The conference was controlled by the Menshevik and Social Revolutionary groups, and confined itself to advocating heavier taxation of the capitalists, the standardization of prices of certain articles consumed by the working class, state control of important branches of industry, and similar measures. A general tendency toward coalition and cooperation with the employers also manifested itself at this conference. Nevertheless, it advocated the industrial principle of organization and established a central organization for the trade union movement.

From this time on, however, the union movement swung sharply to the left, due, in part, to the vacillation and weakness of the Kerensky government and its desire to prolong Russia's participation in the war. The growth of the Bolshevik strength in the unions was due in part, also, to the attacks of the employers and their associations on the workers. The latter became thoroughly disillusioned concerning the government and were further aroused by attacks on what they conceived

to be their rights and gains under the Revolution. The employers not only provoked strikes of local unions which they then proceeded to crush individually, but also used the lock-out to combat the workers' demands for an eight-hour day, increased wages, workers' control, unemployment insurance and similar legislation.

In the bitter struggles between workers and employers which continued during the summer and fall of 1917 the unions of industrial workers supported Bolshevik policies and were, in fact, the fighting force that affected the overthrow of the Coalition Government and the setting up of the Soviet Government in the October Revolution. Their strikes, their agitation and their Red Guards were the instruments through which the Revolution was carried out. It was they who, under Bolshevik leadership, took over state power for the workers and peasants. With the exception of the printers, commercial and bank employees, and the higher grades of railway-men, practically all the unions were on the October barricades.

In Petrograd, Moscow and the other industrial cities union workers were the ones who carried out the final seizure of power and the disarming of the bourgeois classes and their faltering coalition.

AFTER OCTOBER

Immediately following the Revolution the unions continued their loyalty to the new government which they had created. They were in the forefront of the struggles against the sabotage of the higher officials of industries and state institutions. They declared that strikes during the period of consolidation of the state power in the hands of the soviets constituted, in effect,

counter-revolution, and did all they could to prevent them and to settle them quickly when they occurred. Their main job then was to help the workers' and peasants' government maintain order and put down its class enemies. The unions led the movement "back to work", realizing that the factories must be kept going, under workers' control, if the working population was to be supplied with clothes and needed commodities.

"Workers' control" at that time meant not ownership of the factories and workshops by the particular group of workers employed in them, but rather operation of a sort of control committee to check up on the activities of the private employer and to see that he ran his plant with the greatest possible efficiency consistent with those turbulent days. If an employer fled from the scene this committee would take over the operation of the enterprise, which was forthwith nationalized. Workers' control was thus in itself not the socialization of the factory, but in practice it often proved to be the first step in this direction. In the working out of this process the union proved to be the uniting and integrating factor, giving order and uniformity to acts of local factory committees. In the course of this important duty the unions became themselves virtually a part of the machinery of government.

The new role of the unions was discussed at the First All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions called in Petrograd in January, 1918. This congress recognized the fact that the whole question of workers' control was bound up with "the general system of regulation of national economy; that it is the basis of State regulation."² It likewise decided that the trade unions could not be

² Losovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

neutral in the struggle to establish socialism during the period of proletarian dictatorship. Consequently it passed resolutions strongly supporting the Soviet Government and expressing its desire to work with it in the tremendous task of economic construction. The congress also confirmed the action of the conference of trade unions held the previous June, that "the factory committees must become local organs of the union" and should not carry on an existence separate and apart from the union movement. Accordingly it abolished the Central Council of the Factory Committees which hitherto had played an independent role in uniting the committees of various factories. This congress also strengthened the "production principle" of organization, provided for a further centralization of the union on vertical lines and stressed the role of the unions in the industrial upbuilding of the country.

The story of the unions during the entire period of war communism would provide material for a separate volume. Briefly, it may be said that from this time on the unions, firmly led by the Communist Party, held economic and political views practically identical with those of the leaders of the Party and the government. During the long and trying period of the civil wars the unions were practically mobilization centers, and skilled union workers from the metal, textile and other factories were the shock troops that drove back the White armies and the foreign interventionists on every front. In regions where the counter-revolutionary forces were successful for a time the unions were wiped out and their leaders shot. Whenever the Red troops won territory the unions were restored and workers' organizations helped to reestablish soviet control. The history of the unions during this period is the colorful and dramatic

story of military campaigns in which the forces of the workers were finally successful over the forces of the capitalists, the land owners and the foreign armies of intervention.⁸

In addition to their important role as aids to the Commissariat of War during this period, the unions exercised other political and economic functions. They were represented directly in the Central Executive Committee of the government. They took the lead in organizing the Supreme Council of National Economy (frequently called the Supreme Economic Council) which operated most of the nationalized industries. They organized the central board set up to manage various industries during that period, and they had a majority of the members on these boards. They were practically supreme in the management of individual factories, having one of their men either as manager or at least as assistant manager to share responsibility with the technician in charge of the plant. They also organized the Commissariat of Labor and put one of their leaders at the head of it. In fact this department was completely under their control, at least at its central headquarters in Moscow. One of the duties of this commissariat was to enforce decisions of the Central Council of Trade Unions. Through it the unions drew up wage scales, drafted all labor legislation and directed the extensive system of social insurance. Furthermore, the union acquired great influence in the Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, a supervisory organization having extensive

⁸ A brief history of the Russian unions in each industry from the early days to the present is contained in *Professionalnie Soyusy (The Trade Unions), U.S.S.R.—Past and Present, 1905-1917-1927*, published recently by the Commission for the Study of the History of the Trade Union Movement of the U.S.S.R.

powers, used chiefly to resist bureaucratic tendencies in the government and in state industries.

This identity with the machinery of government was accompanied by compulsory membership in the unions, while union dues were deducted from the worker's wages. The unions naturally received subsidies from the government during this period, and were not compelled, as they are at present, to rely solely on membership dues and contributions to sustain their regular budget.⁴

UNDER THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY

With the adoption of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1921, the return of private trade, and the reorganization of the governmental industry, the trade unions altered their functions considerably. They turned themselves from virtual managers of industry into defenders and protectors of the workers' rights as against those of private employers, as well as against bureaucratic tendencies in the state industries. Some of the changes that took place as a result of the NEP were the following: The unions became economic collaborators and advisers but without any direct responsibility in the management of industry. They were represented, however, on "committees for drafting the programs of the economic organizations, . . . the designation of undertakings to form part of a trust . . . or to be leased, foreign

⁴I. Resnikov in his *Trade Union Organisation in U.S.S.R.* (Published, 1927, by the Foreign Relations Committee of the C.C.T.U.) contends that "collective membership" was not compulsory membership in the literal sense of the word. It meant merely that the majority of the workers in a factory having decided by vote to join the union, the minority was bound by the will of the majority as in any typical closed shop in America.

business relations, the determination of branches of industry in which private capital may be admitted to Russian industry."⁶ In other words the unions were to maintain the same general interest in economic matters while giving up the very broad powers they had possessed before in this domain.

With the decrease in their economic functions and their growing importance as independent protective organizations, the unions, as we have noted, put themselves on a voluntary membership basis and union dues were paid individually. At the same time they instituted the present system of voluntary collective bargaining whereby collective agreements are made after a period of negotiation between the union and the employing state trust or private enterprise. There was, also, at least when the Trade Union Congress met in February, 1922, a considerable shifting of weight to the lower branches of the unions and a tendency away from the extraordinary centralization of the period of war communism.

The introduction of the NEP also resulted in the transfer of other functions previously performed by the unions. The Commissariat of Labor, for example, took over the legislative powers of labor protection as well as the administration of labor legislation. It also assumed the role of chief arbitrator in labor disputes. Likewise the unions, from then on, acted only in a consultative capacity to the Commissariat of Education. In general it may be said that the unions were denationalized and no longer formed a part of the machinery of the state. Being thus declared free, independent and autonomous bodies, their legal status was redefined in

⁶ Joint statement issued by the All-Russian Council of Trade Unions and the Supreme Economic Council in November, 1921.

section XV of the Labor Code of 1922. This section designated the place the unions still occupy in the economic life of the country.

The Code declares, in the first place, that the unions "may appear before the various authorities in the name of the wage earners as parties to collective agreements"; they are not liable to registration by the state, but only with the central inter-union federations already in existence. It provides that the unions shall have certain services furnished them by the state, such as Labor Palaces and specified postal, telephone and transport facilities. Other instructions in the Code concern the organization of shop committees, which we shall touch on later in discussing trade union structure. Still other provisions deal with the unions' relation to collective agreements, work contracts, rules of employment, standards of output, hours of work, rest periods, apprenticeship, remuneration, settlement of disputes and other matters, some of which will be dealt with in later chapters.

In general this Labor Code defined the position and rights of the unions under the NEP and laid the basis for the steady development in their power and influence that has been evidenced since 1922.

In considering the transition from war communism to the NEP we should mention the controversy that arose in government, party, and trade union circles concerning the role of the unions under the new regime. Trotsky and a certain element in the unions fought to keep them a part of the government apparatus. Trotsky himself, while president of the War Council, had issued orders to the First Revolutionary Labor Army, as it was called, in January, 1920. He saw no reason why the unions should not continue to be at the beck and

call of the government. Lenin, on the other hand, seeing the conflicts implicit in the economic regime about to be introduced, advocated the management of the industries by the technical men appointed by the state trusts. The unions, he argued, would have their hands full for a while, at least, defending the interests of the workers both against bureaucracy in the trusts and exploitation by the private "Nepmen." He contended that the socialist state would not be built overnight, that even the "Red Director" under the new economic plan would naturally give his first thought to making a success of his particular enterprise. The unions should therefore be independent of governmental machinery and devote their primary attention to guarding the workers' interests as workers. This position was set forth clearly in December, 1921, in a statement prepared by a commission of which Lenin was a member. It said:

"On the Trade Union, in relation to socialized concerns, rests the absolute duty to safeguard the interests of the workers, to assist in every way possible the improvement of the material conditions, and constantly to rectify the faults and exaggerations of economic bodies in so far as they proceed from a bureaucratic perversion of the machinery of the state."

Expressed in another way:

"The chief task of the trade unions is, from now onward, to safeguard at all times in every possible way the class interests of the proletariat in its struggle with capitalism. This task should be openly given prominence. Trade union machinery

must be correspondingly reconstructed, reshaped and made complete—there should be organized conflict commissions, strike funds, mutual aid funds, and so on.”⁶

This was the policy at the beginning of the NEP, and it is still the essential policy of the Russian unions. The remarkable economic development of the country since that date, and the growth in the unions, has not materially modified it.

⁶“Russian Trade Unions Under the New Economic Policy,” *Labour Monthly*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (April-May, 1922), p. 349.

CHAPTER III

MEMBERSHIP AND DISTRIBUTION

THE size of the various unions and their growth since the Revolution need concern us here only in a general way. In the first place it may be pointed out that we find in Russia a larger number of workers now united in trade unions than in any country in the world; and that these 10,000,000 workers are embraced in only 23 unions which are united in a single central organization known as the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (A. C. C. T. U., or simply C. C. T. U.).

Before the October Revolution there existed a large number of small unions that had sprung up mostly after the March days. A long and tedious amalgamating process finally reduced the number to 23. In July, 1917, over 100 separate ones, mostly craft unions, were in the field. By January, 1918, the number had been reduced to 57. From then on the cutting and consolidating continued till in 1922 the present 23 remained. It was only in 1920 that the forestry workers, for example, were united with the agricultural workers and that the pharmaceutical workers consolidated with the public health workers, and the banking and finance workers with the soviet, public and commercial employees union. Domestic workers, barbers and firemen, in the same year, decided to join with the municipal workers' union. The glass workers came into the chemical workers' union in

1921. At the same time certain divisions were made after this process of amalgamation had been carried too far. For example, the water transport and railroad workers, now in separate unions, were united during 1920-1922. The art workers and the educational workers were also in one national body in 1921-1922.

The figures for union membership prior to the introduction of the NEP mean very little; for, although not stated in trade union regulations, practically every person working for hire had to belong to some union. The following table gives an approximate idea of their increasing strength from 1917 to 1921:

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1917—First half year..... | 1,475,000 |
| 1918—First half year..... | 1,946,235 |
| 1919—First half year..... | 3,706,779 |
| 1920—First half year..... | 5,222,006 |
| 1920—Second half year..... | 6,856,940 |
| 1921—First half year..... | 8,418,362 ¹ |

These figures show a steady growth of trade union membership from the March Revolution to the introduction of the NEP. They reflect the gradual geographical extension of the soviet power during the days of civil war as well as the normal growth of unionism in regions which remained under uninterrupted soviet control.

Nine months after the total union membership had reached nearly 8.5 million (July, 1921), it had fallen to 5,846,000, and continued to drop until 1923, when the unions had recovered from the drastic change in economic organization caused by the NEP, and had caught their stride in the movement to build themselves up on a purely voluntary membership basis. It should be re-

¹ *Statistical Collection U.S.S.R., 1918-1923*, p. 246 (in Russian).

membered that a large part of the reduction in membership at the beginning of the NEP was due to the exclusion of members of *artels*, producers' cooperatives and communes, as well as single home craft workers (*kustari*), all of whom had previously been enrolled in the unions.

The total membership of the 23 unions on July 1, 1927, according to preliminary data, was 10,250,000, this number constituting about 94 percent of the people working for hire in the U. S. S. R. For the purpose of showing the distribution of membership, union by union, as well as its growth since 1922, we have used in the following table figures compiled up to April, 1927, while the figures for the percentage organized in each group are as of October 1, 1926. For certain unions the percentages are missing due either to late returns by the unions or to difficulties in estimating the total number of workers employed in a given group. The total percentage of those organized comes, however, to an estimated 93 percent.

Membership fluctuations of the 23 unions from 1922 to 1927 are indicated in the table on the next page.

It will be noted that certain unions in industries that enjoyed a continuous effective demand for their products or services scarcely declined at all. The textile union, for example, reported nearly 100,000 more members in 1923 than in the previous year. The paper workers also rose during the same period, as did the printers, food workers, sugar workers, local transport workers, municipal workers and the domestic and hotel trades. The increases in all the unions since they fell to their lowest membership point in the fall of 1922 has corresponded in general to the growth in the industries and services involved.

NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF SOVIET TRADE UNIONS FROM APRIL 1, 1922 TO APRIL 1, 1927 (in thousands)

Figures for the First of April Each Year

| Name of Union | 1922 | 1923 | 1924 | 1925 | 1926 | 1927 | Percentage of Organization of Workers Oct. 1, 1926 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---|
| Land and Forest Workers..... | 463.7 | 237.9 | 297.9 | 497.6 | 922.3 | 1,122.3 | |
| Paper Workers | 20.0 | 23.1 | 28.6 | 32.4 | 41.1 | 43.3 | 95.0 |
| Mine Workers | 284.9 | 271.4 | 294.9 | 282.3 | 387.1 | 443.3 | 85.6 |
| Wood Workers | 149.1 | 101.4 | 127.9 | 175.0 | 158.6 | 171.3 | 88.8 |
| Leather Workers | 96.3 | 82.9 | 94.5 | 109.5 | 119.1 | 122.3 | 95.6 |
| Metal Workers | 518.1 | 465.6 | 541.1 | 618.5 | 782.2 | 860.0 | 92.2 |
| Printers | 61.0 | 71.2 | 81.1 | 94.1 | 110.5 | 110.3 | 98.3 |
| Food Workers | 205.3 | 226.5 | 273.1 | 341.8 | 423.2 | 456.5 | 92.1 |
| Sugar Workers | 32.8 | 38.4 | 58.8 | 129.8 | 101.0 | 105.7 | |
| Textile Workers | 359.6 | 457.2 | 502.5 | 624.1 | 773.1 | 826.0 | 96.6 |
| Chemical Workers | 156.5 | 145.8 | 162.4 | 180.7 | 225.4 | 242.0 | 93.8 |
| Clothing Workers | 63.3 | 50.3 | 57.3 | 65.1 | 68.4 | 75.4 | 92.2 |
| Building Workers | 171.8 | 129.9 | 211.9 | 316.6 | 536.0 | 624.0 | |
| Water Transport Workers..... | 189.8 | 132.7 | 139.4 | 139.4 | 154.6 | 166.3 | |
| Railroad Workers | 836.3 | 665.6 | 769.5 | 805.6 | 977.1 | 1,096.9 | 94.9 |
| Local Transport Workers..... | 122.8 | 122.9 | 147.2 | 164.9 | 173.2 | 178.5 | 94.6 |
| Post, Telegraph and Telephone Workers..... | 124.9 | 103.4 | 102.9 | 102.0 | 112.0 | 115.2 | 93.8 |
| Art Workers | | 70.5 | 72.9 | 75.7 | 81.3 | 88.7 | 99.6 |
| Public Health Workers..... | 408.5 | 298.4 | 343.1 | 382.6 | 442.7 | 499.1 | 97.7 |
| Educational Workers | 666.5 | 414.3 | 526.7 | 585.0 | 686.9 | 771.9 | 93.3 |
| State, Public and Commercial Employees..... | 733.0 | 536.6 | 722.0 | 894.5 | 1,069.3 | 1,197.0 | 88.2 |
| Municipal Workers | 136.4 | 144.9 | 175.4 | 198.1 | 228.1 | 244.4 | 97.5 |
| Domestic, Hotel and Restaurant Workers..... | 46.1 | 50.0 | 89.6 | 135.1 | 195.0 | 267.4 | 96.7 |
| All | 5,846.9 | 4,840.9 | 5,822.7 | 6,950.4 | 8,768.2 | 9,827.8 | |

The distribution of union membership according to the constituent republics of the U. S. S. R. is as follows:

| <i>Republic</i> | <i>Union Members</i> | <i>Total Population *</i> |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic..... | 7,045,800 | 99,670,000 |
| Ukrainian S. S. Republic..... | 1,930,700 | 28,879,000 |
| White Russian S. S. Republic..... | 224,300 | 4,926,000 |
| Transcaucasian S. F. S. Republic..... | 408,900 | 5,791,000 |
| Uzbek S. S. Republic..... | 177,100 | 4,562,000 |
| Turkoman S. S. Republic..... | 41,000 | 987,000 |
| U. S. S. R..... | 9,827,800 | 144,815,000 |

The provinces having by far the largest industrial population, and hence trade union membership, in the R. S. F. S. R. are Moscow, Leningrad and Ivanovo-Vosnesensk. However, the Ural Region and the North Caucasian Region are much larger areas geographically and each has over a half million trade unionists.

One interesting point brought out by M. Tomsky, Chairman of the Russian unions, in a speech made in the fall of 1926, may be mentioned in connection with the question of membership. It was discovered that in April of that year the number of workers employed in factories and institutions in the U. S. S. R. was 7,700,000, while the number of union members on the same date was 8,768,200. "This", says Tomsky, "is very easily explained. First of all, in the figures of the workers and employees engaged in factories and institutions certain groups are not included, for instance, seasonal workers; also groups of agricultural workers and the unemployed who remain members of the trade unions." He also mentioned the proletarian students as being another group included in the unions but not in the fig-

* Population figures are from the tables in *Commercial Handbook of the U.S.S.R.* for 1927.

ures of workers engaged in factories and institutions. }

As the figures stand then, in April, 1927, approximately 93 percent of the eligible manual and non-manual workers of the country are included in the membership of the 23 unions. Comparisons with percentages of workers organized in capitalist countries are not fair in view of the unique position of the Russian unions with relation to the Soviet Government and the various degrees of restriction or repression of unions practiced by the employers, and their governments, in other countries. However, it may be helpful merely to note in passing certain estimates as to the proportion of wage earners organized in other countries. According to figures prepared for the *American Labor Year Book* (1927, page 201) about 52 percent of the working class were organized in Austria in 1924, 43 percent in Australia, 44 percent in Czechoslovakia, 35 percent in Germany, 35 percent in Sweden and 34 percent in Great Britain and Ireland. The same tables showed only 12 percent organized in the United States although others have estimated the number of wage earners organized here at between 17 and 18 percent. }

The smallest percentage of organized workers in Russia is found in the land and forest workers' union and in unions such as the building trades and the sugar workers, with a large number of seasonal and temporary workers. (It is estimated that there are more than 700,000 seasonal workers in the Russian unions.) The heads of the organization department of the C. C. T. U. with whom I talked, could only hazard a guess as to the total number of agricultural wage workers who are eligible for union membership. Some 1,122,000 are organized out of possibly 2,000,000 or more in the whole U. S. S. R. Most of those organized are from state }

farms, employees of the Department of Agriculture, shepherds and some farmhands working for the richer peasants.

In addition to the land and forest workers, 3,456,100 of the 9,827,800 organized workers in the whole country are in industry proper, 624,000 in building, 1,556,900 in transportation and communication, 2,556,700 in state and public institutions and 511,800 in miscellaneous lines of work. In no other country is such a high percentage of labor organized in any of these branches of economic activity.

As we have noted, the Russian workers have reduced their unions to the lowest possible number. It may be of interest to those of us who live in countries cluttered with craft unions to note the workers that are included in sample Russian unions.

UNION JURISDICTIONS

The miners' union includes not only coal miners, but miners of oil, gold, platinum, iron ore, salt, as well as peat diggers.

The needle trades' union includes all workers on men's, women's and children's garments, as well as furs, hats and caps, ties, leather goods, passamenterie work, artificial flowers, gloves, bags, sacks, canvas goods and the like.

The "public eating", hotel and domestic workers' union includes all workers in kitchens, cafés, dining rooms, tea rooms, beer saloons, buffets in clubs and theatres, milk lunches and even billiard halls. One section of this union includes those who work in Labor Palaces, homes of unions, soviet houses, rest homes, pensions, hotels, furnished room places, as well as ser-

vants, cooks, nurses and chambermaids in private homes and establishments.

The municipal workers' union includes an equally large number of categories such as workers on tramways, and at electrical and gas stations, street sweepers, plumbers, street lighting workers, those charged with the upkeep of gardens and parks, janitors, laundry workers, barbers and bathhouse attendants, grave diggers, firemen, undertakers and garbage collectors.

The other unions also embrace crafts that in America would be in a dozen or a score of separate organizations. Their names, for example, railroad workers, building workers, printing trades workers, mean that every worker connected with their operations is included. In the United States such broad multi-industrial unions will probably be formed only after decades of struggle for amalgamation.

The soviet and commercial employees' union is one of the largest and most inclusive bodies, and takes in all government workers in the numerous state departments, and many economic organizations working under the state, as well as cooperatives, credit institutions, financial-taxation bodies, and a wide variety of occupations in private trade and business and in numerous social institutions.

Similarly the art workers include all those employed in theatres, moving pictures, orchestras, choirs, circuses, amusements, photographic establishments and laboratories, art and sculpture studios, and those engaged in teaching music, ballet, drama and opera. Artists, composers, dramatists and movie scenario writers are all members of this union.

CHAPTER IV

THE UNION IN THE FACTORY

THE FACTORY COMMITTEE

{ THE basic unit of the Russian trade union is in the factory or enterprise. To understand how the twenty-three industrial unions function one must begin by visiting factories. When we know what goes on there we will be in a position to understand the higher organization both of separate unions and inter-union bodies.

Let us take a large textile factory in Moscow, a unit of production with some 8,000 workers, which I visited several times both in 1923 and 1927.¹ The union organization there is typical of that prevailing in every such enterprise and institution employing workers throughout Russia.

If you board a tramway in front of the Grand Opera House and ride fifteen minutes from the center of Moscow you come to this textile plant spread out along the Moscow river below one of the typical working class districts of the city. Here during the 1905 revolt eighteen workers were murdered by Cossacks, and here, in a mansion that is now the factory hospital, lived one of the proprietors of the plant. Going down the hill past the factory club and an open air nursery for chil-

¹ This happens, by a coincidence, to be the very plant described in detail in Chapter I of Brailsford's *How the Soviets Work*, in this series. I have omitted important phases of factory life vividly pictured by Brailsford.

dren, one hears the roar of the weaving plant. Directly opposite this department is a long, two-storied building formerly occupied by a boss. It is the object of our visit. It houses the factory committee as well as all the workers' organizations connected with the plant. Go up the wide stairway to the second floor and you will find one door marked "Protection of Labor Committee", another "Culture Committee", another "Mutual Aid Society", another "Wage-Conflict Committee". You pass these doors as you go down the hall toward the main headquarters of the *fabkom*, (Russian abbreviation for factory committee—some translate it factory council or works council) under which all these other committees operate. The *fabkom* has separate offices for the president, secretary and cashier, and a general conference room with a long table covered by a red cloth. Pictures of textile union leaders look down from its walls between an assortment of bright union charts and posters.

As you wait in this room for the president of the *fabkom* to finish talking with some workers, you remember the clause in the Labor Code which informed you "the management of the undertaking, institution or enterprise shall grant the committee the use of a room free of charge, with the necessary equipment, heating and lighting, both for the business of the committee itself and for general and delegates meetings."

Here is your "local union", or the nearest thing you have to a local union in Russia, with its headquarters provided by the industry. You begin to perceive that trade unions must have some power in a state with a Labor Code like that. This train of thought is interrupted by the president, who comes forward with a smile and a greeting to answer your questions. He is a sturdy looking fellow in a grey Russian shirt and has

committees. Any complaints about wage payments, housing, medical service, social insurance payments, discharge and a hundred other matters he brings to this committee.

And the employer, state or private, knows he has to deal with it in all matters affecting the labor force. For example, when he hires or discharges workers he must give due notice in advance to the committee. When it is a choice between a number of persons the fabkom decides who is to be discharged. If the employer hires workers temporarily, he must have its consent. Overtime work must be approved by it. These are only examples of the control it exercises.

In this particular textile factory the committee is chosen at an electors' meeting comprising well over a thousand workers. These electors are picked by the workers in their own departments. In small factories and institutions the whole body of workers in a general meeting elects the fabkom. A special election committee usually lists the nominations which are made in the separate departments or from the floor at the election meeting. A description of this election system is given in Chapter XIII.

The fabkoms are established in all enterprises employing more than twenty-five workers. Small shops with less than twenty-five workers have what is known as a trade union agent; or a number of adjacent, small enterprises, each with less than twenty-five workers, may unite in one group committee or *groupkom*. When a trade union agent is appointed, he is simply a worker selected by his shopmates to devote a certain part of his time to union duties.

The number of workers comprising a committee is determined by the trade union involved, but the gen-

{ eral recommendation is that the number never exceed twenty even in large plants. The ratio usually observed is:

| <i>Workers in Plant</i> | <i>Committee Members</i> |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 25 to 100 | 3 |
| 100 to 300 | 5 |
| 300 to 1,000..... | 9 |
| 1,000 to 5,000..... | 13 |
| above 5,000..... | 15-20 |

{ The number of members of the committee who are exempted from their work in the factory, and who receive their average regular wages while performing duties as full-time fabkom members, is usually as follows:

| <i>Workers in Plant</i> | <i>Full Time Committeemen</i> |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 25 to 50 | 1* |
| 50 to 300 | 1 |
| 300 to 1,000..... | 2 |
| 1,000 to 5,000..... | 3 |
| over 5,000..... | 5 |

The amount paid by the employing enterprises for the upkeep of the fabkom is stipulated in the collective agreement between the union and the trust. This amount never exceeds two percent of the total wage bill of the plant. Medium sized government factories pay an average of about one percent. In this large textile factory the rate is only one half of one percent.

The fabkom usually meets in non-working hours, although the full-time members hold more frequent conferences alone or with the management of the enter-

* For not more than 2 days a week.

prise at any hour of the day. Although they are now elected for one-year terms, committee members must give full reports every six months to general factory meetings or to delegates' meetings, depending on the size of the enterprise. If these reports are unsatisfactory a new committee may be elected immediately.

A committeeman has the right to get back his job in the plant when he has finished his term of service. There is no such thing as "discrimination" against workers who have been active on the fabkom. Its members may be discharged only with the consent of their union. The members also may, at any time, inspect all workshops with which they are connected as well as all laboratories and offices of the plant.

When one visits a factory in the Soviet Union one goes first to the fabkom office. A representative of that body usually accompanies you when you go through the plant.

SUB-COMMITTEES

As we have already noted, certain subcommittees or "commissions" are always appointed by the fabkom to carry out specific functions assigned to them. In this textile factory we found committees on the protection of labor, culture and education, wage-conflict, and production. One or more members of the fabkom usually presides over these subcommittees. The number appointed to each depends upon the rules of the particular union, the size of the enterprise and the number of available active workers. Committees meet during non-working hours and receive no extra compensation for their services. Each member usually has some particular phase of the work on which he reports and for which he is made responsible.

The activities of these committees may be summarized as follows:

1. The protection of labor committee helps in the enforcement of labor legislation, the prevention of accidents and the provision of health protection for workers. Such matters as housing, operation of day nurseries, guarding of machinery and similar measures come under its supervision. It decides which workers are to be sent to rest homes and sanatoria; it supervises the expenditure of monies spent for factory laundries, communal baths and children's homes, and encourages workers' cooperatives.

2. The culture (or cultural-educational) committee directs a wide range of activities, which will be discussed at greater length in Chapter XIV. It cares for every sort of work intended to raise the cultural level of the workers, supervises technical education, clubs, libraries, physical culture, the sending of members to workers' high schools, the selling of cut-price tickets to city theatres, the organization of movies, "red corners" and classes, subscriptions to papers, editing of "wall newspapers", and campaigns to eliminate illiteracy. All these activities, and more, were carried on by the culture committee of this large textile factory. On account of its size, special committees of a similar kind had also been organized in the separate departments of the plant.

3. The committee for "the assessment of wages and the conciliation of disputes," which may be called for short the "wage-conflict" committee, is actually a joint committee composed of an equal number from fabkom and management. It performs a wide range of duties connected with settling wage scales and adjusting disputes, solving questions arising out of enforcement of labor law as well as collective agreements, and the fixing of

factory rules. Its decisions are made by unanimous vote. Some of its functions will be discussed at greater length in Chapter VIII. ✓

The production committee, which will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter XI, has as its chief aim improvement of the technique of the factory, prevention of waste, increasing productivity, enlistment of the inventive genius of the workers, and the general "ration-alization" of production. 4.

In addition to these regular subcommittees which are appointed by all fabkoms, we always find an auditing committee and sometimes special committees, such as committees on housing, students, walks and excursions, cooperation, finance, safeguarding women's work, theatre, aid to homeless children, contacts with the village, and international workers' relief. They are usually temporary bodies working under the subcommittees or directly under the fabkom. 5.

We ask the president of this textile fabkom how a new worker would go about joining the union. He answers that the worker can join by filing his application with the fabkom. He is admitted only when his name is presented and voted upon, usually at a general meeting of the workers of his department. In a smaller plant he could be admitted only by the vote of a general membership meeting. Those who are rejected at such a meeting have the right to appeal to the higher union body.

It should be remembered in this connection that workers now join the unions quite voluntarily, though the "social pressure", as we have suggested, is very strong and the privileges to be obtained by joining are

clearly pointed out. There is, however, nothing comparable to the "closed shop" as it prevails in the American building trades. In its stead exists what might be termed the "preferential shop", whereby the employer agrees to hire union labor through the state labor exchange. But if a union member of the desired qualifications is not available, the labor exchange may give the employer a non-union worker, who may remain non-union if he so desires. In practice, however, the advantages of union membership are so apparent that he soon makes an application to join.

When a union member changes his place of employment he is transferred without admission or other fee to the union covering his new occupation. With his union book stamped by the fabkom he loses no rights or seniority through the change. No worker can be a member of more than one union at a time. Up to the age of eighteen he may vote in all elections to the fabkom. On reaching that age he is eligible to hold any office in the organization.

The number of fabkoms (they are known variously as factory workshop committees, local committees, group committees, place committees and office committees) in the trade union structure of the U. S. S. R. was given in January, 1927, as nearly 60,000 as compared with less than 50,000 in October, 1925. This increase was due to the opening up of new industries and the strengthening of the local work of the unions.

In January, 1927, the statistical department of the Central Council of Trade Unions received reports from some 46,300 fabkoms representing a total union membership of 6,800,000 or about 70 percent of all the trade union members in the country. Serving on these committees were 220,000 members, some 25,000 of

whom were released for full-time work. Working under these fabkoms were approximately 32,500 protection of labor committees with 124,000 members; 32,650 culture-education committees with 158,000 workers; and 18,000 production committees with 107,000 members. These figures give some idea of the wide distribution of the basic units of union organization. The fabkoms and their subcommittees are important, not only because they are the foundation stones of union structure, but also because they attract so many new workers into active participation in the organization. It is estimated that about 65 percent of the members of the fabkoms in January, 1927, were newly elected workers who were serving for the first time. The same figures show that 66 percent of the fabkom members are manual workers (the distinction is always made in Russian union statistics between the manual and non-manual or office worker) and that 18.5 percent of them are women.

The fabkom is a growing force in the Soviet Union. It brings workers not only into the unions but into the whole economic activity of the country. It is the primary organ of workers' democracy in a government and an industrial system operated for and by workers. In no other country does this type of workers' council have so much power, even though it has been recognized in the laws of a few European countries such as Germany and Austria. In no other country does it have such varied and important functions. Nowhere do its members have so much freedom and responsibility as in the U. S. S. R. It acts as the fundamental contact point through which the worker begins to take part in factory as well as in social life, to exercise his rights as a worker in the community, and to participate in building up the nationalized industries.

DELEGATES

Before we leave this factory we must learn something about another institution that is characteristic of all large Russian factories,—the factory delegates. In the larger factories, usually those with more than two hundred workers, it is impossible for the factory committee to keep in close touch with all union members, to know all their desires and demands. So we have this intermediate body of delegates chosen by the workers at the machines, one for every ten to thirty workers, depending on the lay-out of the departments, the positions of the machines in the rooms, and other factors. In this plant with 8,000 workers, including the weaving, spinning, dyeing, printing and other departments, we find 268 such delegates. They are chosen every six months at group meetings of the workers involved. They hold a meeting every fortnight. Twice a year they report in a more formal way to their constituents. But all the time they serve as vital, personal links, connecting the mass of the workers with the factory committees and reflecting sensitively the feeling of the masses.

DEPARTMENTAL BUREAUS

In the larger factories one finds also what are known as departmental bureaus. Six of them function in this factory. These bureaus are simply a group of workers elected at a departmental meeting, their purpose being to help the fabkom carry out its work in a given department. They have no office but work as a committee engaged on the special problems of their department and confer often about them. Where the departments are small there may be only departmental agents, or one

worker carrying out the same general functions: to draw the workers of the section into general union and factory work, to help solve union problems in the department without the intervention of the fabkom, to assist with the collection of dues, to help in sanitary inspection, and to draw workers into clubs and union classes. They also call departmental meetings to discuss special matters of interest to the group. On January 1, 1927, some 22,000 of these departmental bureaus, or agents, were reported from unions representing 6.8 million workers.

DUES COLLECTORS

Nearly 140,000 members of Russian unions act as dues collectors in the factory or institution. The general rule is to have groups of from ten to fifty workers, depending on the size and character of the departments, choose their own collectors. In this factory, for example, where the job has been well systematized, about 200 of them are at work.

Each collector has a sort of pocket-book which he obtains from the fabkom. In it he carries the dues stamps of various denominations, and is responsible to the cashier of the fabkom for all the stamps he secures. When he has sold his stamps to his constituency, each worker paying 2 percent of his monthly wages, the collector brings the money to the cashier and obtains a receipt for it. In shops where the stamp system is not used the collector takes the books to the cashier's office where the dues are entered. All the collectors work without pay "as a social duty", as our informant put it. Some of them collect during working hours, others before and after hours, depending upon the character of their work.

CHAPTER V

INDUSTRIAL UNIONS

A PROVINCIAL HEADQUARTERS

THE Russian worker comes into most intimate contact with his union through the factory committee. The next higher step on the union ladder is usually what is called the *ooyezd* department, an *ooyezd* approximating what we call in America a county. This administrative unit exists, however, only in the less urbanized sections. In Moscow City, there is no such intermediate body between the factory committee and the *gubernia* or provincial department of the union.

In the territory of Moscow Province, outside Moscow City, the factories will elect delegates to *ooyezd* congresses and conferences and an *ooyezd* department will be formed. But this department works under the control, and on the budget, of the more important provincial department of the union which we shall describe in this chapter. In certain parts of the U. S. S. R., such as in the Ukraine, other geographical divisions comparable to the province prevail. Such, for example, is the *okrug* (district) which we found in the city discussed in Chapter I. It would only confuse the reader to use these geographical names interchangeably, for the same general scheme of organization prevails in all parts of the U. S. S. R. irrespective of the local names applied. When we have described one provincial department we

have described the general workings of all of them.

Omitting then the ooyezd or county organization which exists in the more scattered districts, we may pass directly from our Moscow textile factory to the provincial office of the union. It directs the work of all the underlying fabkoms, trade union agents and ooyezd officers. The provincial department of this textile union is set up at an annual congress of delegates from the factories in Moscow province, the ratio being one delegate for every 300 workers. This congress elects an executive committee of 61 which in turn selects a management board or "presidium" of nine members to carry on the work of the department between sessions of the executive committee. The number on the executive committee and the presidium will, of course, vary from union to union and province to province.

In a large grey stone building adjoining the Hotel Savoy a sumptuous café in pre-revolutionary days used to attract rich merchants whose chief indoor recreation, it is said, was to throw champagne bottles through full-length mirrors and then promptly pay for the mirror in cash. In this building the Moscow Provincial Department of the Textile Union is now quartered. On the first floor is a bookstore with walls covered with attractive charts and posters. On the second is a magnificent ballroom, now a meeting hall for congresses, hung with red banners decorated with the loom and the spindle, and bearing such inscriptions as "The Unions Will Strengthen the Country" and "The Union Is the School of Communism".

Beyond the ballroom down the hall come the various offices of the union, first the presidium with its secretary and president; then the head of the organization department, then the tariff-economic department, the statis-

tical and information department, the legal bureau, the engineering and technical section, the cultural-educational department, the unemployment department and finally the financial department where dues are received and benefits paid in a high-mirrored room resembling a bank. While walking around the building, one comes also upon a group of young workers of both sexes bent over tables tussling with their entrance examinations to the *rabfac*, or workers' high school.

In another place a box on the wall cries out, "Stop Comrades. Old papers will be sent to the villages. Drop them here when you have finished reading them. *Smichka* section." Upon inquiry you learn that this strange word means a sort of mutual cooperative relationship between town and country.¹ One thing the union does for the particular village under its patronage is to send used newspapers to the Red Plowman's Reading Room, or to some village circle for the liquidation of "political illiteracy". If you have read your copy of the morning *Pravda* you stick it in the box, and pass on to look in at the dining room, to inspect the library, and finally to read on the stairs an announcement of the coming trade union competitions in basketball and football, or the poster offering free books for subscriptions to the *Voice of the Textile Worker*, the national journal of the union. Having found one's bearings in this way, it is time to visit a few of the departments, to interrupt the busy young officials and to ask them how the wheels go round.

Organization Department

One of the three major departments is the organization department, whose duty is implied in its name.

¹ See *Borders' Village Life Under the Soviets*, in this series, p. 170.

However, since about 100 percent of the 280,000 textile workers in Moscow province are already enlisted in the union, the natural question is "What do you mean by organization work?" The answer, by Comrade Golovkin, head of the department, is, "We do everything that the other departments don't do and we help them besides in organizing their particular work. We work with the factory committees, and the local delegates, directing their work, showing them how to carry on their duties efficiently. We study the shortcomings of the local committees and try to correct them. We intervene when factory committees are unfair or inadequate in their treatment of a union member. We are the higher authority to which workers turn when the fabkom fails to give satisfaction. Our business is primarily to make the rank and file active. In our union in 1925 one out of every thirteen members was an "activist", now it is one out of eleven."

"How is this work carried on?", we ask Comrade Golovkin. "Chiefly through what are known as 'instructors'. We have twenty-two of them on the job at present, one-third of whom are women, as fifty-five percent of our textile workers are women. The instructors help in the preparations for elections; they assist the fabkoms; they answer an endless number of questions for the delegates and lower union agents; they do special work among women, youths, students and among national minorities. They carry on much work for the cultural-educational department."

This was not the first time the writer had heard of these "walking delegates" of the soviet unions. He knew one in 1923—an agent of this same textile union. I had met him in a woolen factory near Moscow where he was consulting with the factory committee about

wage rates to be demanded in forthcoming negotiations with the employers, giving an educational committee instructions concerning the organization of a factory library, telling some young worker athletes how to obtain the best material for gymnasium suits, discussing with the factory director the quota of apprentices and the provision of proper work clothes for men in the weaving room. Remembering my talk with this smiling, quick-witted young organizer, I understood what Golovkin was talking about. I also recalled that my "instructor" friend had told me that he and two others of his kind were expected to cover some eighty factories in the Moscow district, visiting each one at least three or four times a month, some of these visits entailing meetings and conferences which lasted far into the night.

The "instructor" is the "living link" between the shop committees and the provincial trade union office, a worker among the workers; by no means a mere desk official or report maker. His work is intensive, personal, educational. He must be popular, though he is usually not of the stump orator type. He comes from the shop and was, not long ago, a member of a fabkom himself. His day-to-day work puts him no higher and no lower than the worker at the loom and spinning frame. This is the organizer, the agent of the organization department. In the room next to Comrade Golovkin's office one may occasionally find one of them who has come in to headquarters for instructions. All higher union and inter-union offices in the trade union movement of Russia have these "instructors."

Education Department

Another department that must not be omitted in describing this provincial headquarters of the textile union,

is the cultural-educational department. "Instructors" (2) from the organization department are used by it to carry out its work in the various plants; but there is also an additional staff of eighteen special educational "instructors" who work only for this department, which is divided into several sections, each with a responsible head.

The chief of the department tells us that out of the 280,000 textile workers in the province, last year some 24,000 were "active" in carrying on general cultural work, and that 5,000 are busy in the management of clubs. He lays great stress on the technical education of young workers and refers to fifty-two factory schools administered by this department and supported by the textile trust. In fact, these trusts, with whom the collective agreements are made, pay about one percent of their total payroll to the fabkom for the support of educational work. Private firms pay from two to three percent of their total payroll. From twenty to twenty-five percent of the worker's dues goes into cultural work.

In addition to the technical schools, there are all kinds of circles, classes and evening schools directed by this department. Perhaps its most successful work deals with the "liquidation of illiteracy". When this work began a few years ago, 150,000 Moscow textile workers were illiterate. Now there are only 14,000. We shall also have occasion to see later the various forms of recreation administered by this department for the benefit of the textile workers of Moscow province. In the city of Moscow alone there are twenty-five summer gardens as well as four stadiums for athletic games and a "water station" where textile workers have all the swimming, rowing and motor boating they care to enjoy during the

warm months of the year. In addition, fifteen new clubhouses, some of them quite large ones, are being built in Moscow province this year for the textile workers.

Economic Department

So much for a mere glance at the educational department. We step in now for a word with the head of the "wage-economic" department, the man who is in charge of wage negotiations and the making of collective agreements with the textile trusts. He also directs the wage-conflict committees in the factories, as well as the various production committees and conferences. This department employs some twenty "instructors" who are specialists in this line of work.

As we talk to Zorin, chairman of the department, a typical case comes before the "wage-conflict" division. A worker enters without ceremony and sits down to tell his story. He is one of seven laid off in a certain cotton plant, due to some economy in production. The law says that if ten men are laid off as a result of the "regime of rationalization", now being carried out in all Russian plants, the worker is entitled to from six weeks to three months full pay, depending upon the circumstances. (He is also to be given preference in later hiring). But this worker was one of seven, not one of ten. He contends that he could have been given a job elsewhere in the factory, but the mechanic in charge would not do it. He threatens to bring suit against the state textile trust, as he has a perfect right to do under the law. Zorin tells him what the law is and assigns an "instructor" to go with him to the trust office to iron the matter out.

Another division of the department deals with the protection of labor. This division, in fact, runs through

all stages of union structure from the factory committee to the top. Enforcement of labor laws, accident prevention, housing, sanitation, the sending of workers to rest homes and sanatoria and the expenditure of the fund "for the improvement of life" paid by all industries to the unions, come within its jurisdiction. It also helps to establish children's institutions connected with the factories, communal laundries and baths, and encourages workers to participate in consumers' cooperatives.

Still another division under the "wage-economic" department registers the unemployed members of the union and administers special unemployment funds set aside by the union for rendering aid supplementary to that given by the regular state social insurance agencies. An unemployed textile worker receives a certain amount from the union (it happens in this department, at present, to be from \$12.20 to \$14.00 a month with \$2.40 extra for each dependent) the first month he is unemployed. After six months, if he is still out of work—his benefits during this period coming from the state insurance funds—he again receives regular monthly allowances from the union. The amount of this payment varies from union to union, depending upon its financial strength.

The free legal aid bureau occupies a separate suite of rooms in the office of the "wage-economic" department. We inquired of one of the five lawyers in charge what kind of legal questions are troubling the textile workers of Moscow province who come to this bureau. He replied that so-called "labor cases" are the most common. For example, a private manufacturer closed his factory and refused to pay the various benefits due the workers for unused vacations and other purposes. He even went

so far as to have his wife claim the ownership of one half of his property in order to dodge full responsibility for the claims against him. With the aid of the legal bureau, the workers involved were able to recover through the courts over \$100,000. "Labor cases" are also those in which an individual worker carries a dispute with an employer—it may be with either a private boss or a state trust—up through the wage-conflict committee in the factory to the Peoples' Court. The legal bureau refers him to the proper machinery for settlement and advises him at every step.

Civil and criminal cases also come within the purview of this bureau. An example of a civil case is given us. A woman had her shoes and rubbers stolen while on the job in a government weaving factory. She sues, with the help and advice of the union legal bureau, and recovers the cost of the lost articles. A criminal case usually involves the breaking of working rules by the employer. For example, a worker loses a finger or an arm in the course of his job. The employer refuses to pay what the law requires. The worker, with the help of his union bureau, takes the case to the court.

In addition to advice given to workers at headquarters, the union lawyers also go to the factories where they hold consultations for the workers at convenient hours. The union counsellors look at every question from the standpoint of the human rights of the member. And they inform us, furthermore, that when they go to court to help a member recover, for example, his full benefits under the social insurance law, "the case is dispatched quickly, and when the worker is found to be right he receives his compensation promptly and without delay."

A CENTRAL COMMITTEE

The provincial department of the textile union which we have just discussed is only one of some thirty-five similar departments spread over the various provinces, republics and regions of the U. S. S. R. All are subordinate to the All-Russian Textile Workers' Union, a single national union covering the whole country, and including 826,000 workers in the cotton, silk, wool, hemp and flax manufacturing industries.

The federal office of this union, together with that of the other twenty-two national unions, is in the Palace of Labor, a great white building on the Moscow river, not far from the Kremlin. It will take you sometime to find the textile headquarters even after you have passed through the gate in the high iron fence, and entered this labyrinth that covers more than a city block. The corridors of this building (like so many of the labor palaces in Russia, it was formerly a school for the daughters of the nobility) are long and narrow. But if you walk round them far enough, and long enough, you will finally come to the national headquarters of the *textilshbiki*. Here you can talk with some member of the presidium, probably G. Melnechansky, its president. From him you will learn how this national union carries on its work.

The highest organ and the supreme power in the union, he will tell you first, is the biennial congress composed of delegates elected at the provincial congresses of the union on the basis of one to every one thousand union members. In some unions, such as the leather workers, the factories elect directly to the national congress; but in the textile, and other larger unions, pro-

vincial congresses, composed of workers straight from the shop, choose their representatives to the national congress. At the close of its session this congress of some 725 delegates elects a central committee of 61 members and 25 alternates, who, just as in the provinces, choose a presidium to run the business of the union between the central committee's quarterly sessions.

The national union has the same general departments as the provincial textile organization over which it rules—organization, "wage-economic," education, etc., only they direct this work on an all-union scale. It has, in addition, special committees on subjects with which only a national union is competent to deal—international relations, union publications, union history and the like.

The central committee controls the activities of its presidium which organizes and carries on the current work. It is represented on state and economic bodies dealing with the textile industry. It accumulates and distributes special funds for strikes, for unemployment, for educational work, and publishes the national organ as well as books and magazines.

Perhaps the best way to get a quick bird's-eye view of the activities of the national textile union is to run through a report of its latest national congress, mentioning the more important subjects discussed. The agenda includes the following items: the international and domestic situation of the Soviet Union; general report of the central committee; report of the auditing committee; report on the condition and future outlook of the textile industry; report on the outlook for the growth of raw materials for the textile industry. Then come organization questions; the subheadings dealing with mass work, finance work, organizational building of the

union and the constitution. After that follow wage and economic questions, subdivided into wage scale work and collective agreements, production conferences and committees, work of wage-conflict committees, the protection of labor and improvement of the workers' lives; and after that the usual cultural subjects—club work, library work, the liquidation of illiteracy and trade union technical education. All these questions are thoroughly discussed at the national congress.

The report of the central committee itself is a formidable volume covering a wide field and discussing the two years' work of the union. It is distributed to the local unions and the delegates some weeks before the congress. For the last congress the central committee of the textile workers prepared a very readable 70,000 word report dealing with every phase of union activity, with ample information, charts and statistics dealing with the growth of union membership and its distribution, the composition and activities of the fabkoms and delegates' conferences, work among women and young people, mutual aid societies, every phase of central union and provincial finance, production-economic work, Rest Homes, medical aid, wage rates, social insurance, special clothes for workers, housing, labor laws, and their enforcement, nurseries, cooperatives, communal kitchens, production conferences, club work, "red corners", physical culture and a score of other educational activities, engineering and technical sections, international work, and a hundred interrelated topics some of which we have mentioned in describing the work of the provincial union.

When the congress of the national unions has digested reports on all these subjects, it proceeds to lay down the policies for the following two years. It also listens to

CHAPTER VI

INTER-UNION ORGANIZATIONS

A PROVINCIAL TRADES COUNCIL

JUST as in other countries, the Russian unions have their trades councils or inter-union organizations. We have been describing the various stages of the separate industrial unions beginning at the factory, or enterprise, and continuing up through the *ooyezd* department, the provincial department, and finally the national headquarters of the union. The same steps may be traced with the inter-union or "horizontal" bodies.¹

The first important inter-union organization for the non-urbanized districts is thus the *ooyezd* bureau, after which comes the provincial council of trade unions, and at the top the All-Russian Central Council.

The *ooyezd*—or county—bureau is usually formed at an annual conference of delegates from all enterprises within its jurisdiction. It has a central committee that meets about once a month, and a presidium, elected by this committee to carry on its day-to-day work. This bureau receives all its funds from the provincial trades council which is the central directing organization for all

¹ We may note in some districts an inferior body intermediate between the local committee and the *ooyezd*. This is the *volost* secretariat. In districts where the members, say of the educational or public health workers' union, are widely scattered, we have these secretariats established to handle union work among all union members in the *volost*, which is a geographical area corresponding roughly to an American township. This *volost* organization, however, is not very common.

trade union work of the entire province both in the city and country districts.

The central committee of 200 of the Moscow Trades Council is elected at the provincial inter-union congress held every twelve to fifteen months, delegates to this congress being sent from the factories, in the ratio of one delegate for every 1,500 workers. The writer happened to attend one of these congresses in Moscow three years ago. It was held at the House of the Unions (formerly the Nobles Club) in a great ball-room under tremendous glittering chandeliers. The workers were evidently direct from the factory and office and their lively and serious discussions left one with the impression that they were the real rulers of Moscow province. And just as in the United States, representatives of the government (in this case a working class government) came to deliver speeches. The Russians, however, make their addresses more in the style of reports of the last years' work. Representatives of the provincial Council of National Economy, the Commissariat of Labor, the provincial social insurance department and the cooperatives usually report at these congresses.

The headquarters of the Moscow Gubernia Central Council of Trade Unions is in this House of the Unions, from the roof of which rise two great radio-broadcasting towers, a symbol of the work of the cultural-educational department. If you visit these headquarters you will find the usual departments, directing in a more general way than do the separate unions, the activities of some 1,250,000 workers comprising all the members in the twenty-three unions in Moscow province.

Or if you go to Leningrad, or any other provincial center in the country, you will find equally imposing

headquarters and an equally interesting job under way. When I asked members of the Leningrad Central Council just what its functions were, they replied that they were (1) to represent the unions of the province on the Industrial Bureau—the governmental economic organ that directs all the industrial trusts in the Leningrad region, (2) to nominate candidates to local government boards such as the Commissariat of Labor and the social insurance department, (3) to call special conferences of all the unions to discuss questions in which all are equally interested, such as production or the working out of new collective agreements, (4) to carry on an extensive publishing business, to supervise libraries, schools, radio and educational work, (5) through its agents to guide all the union work in its territory, acting as a general clearing house for information and advice on union problems.

The Moscow Central Council has an excellent library which is the center for the library work among the hundreds of factories which it covers. It also runs a competent statistical department, publishes fortnightly and monthly magazines, and conducts a moving picture division, a theatrical bureau, a "checkers and chess committee" and other special departments dealing with the after-work interests of its constituency.

ALL-RUSSIAN CENTRAL COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS

Finally we arrive at the peak of this pyramid of "democratic centralism", as the Russian calls it,—the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions,² which is

² The correct name, as we have indicated before, is the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions—"All-Union," of course, meaning "All Soviet Union," referring to the geographical extent of its affiliations. Perhaps a better word would be "Federal." Throughout this volume the shorter abbreviation "C.C.T.U." has been used in referring to this body.

< elected at an All-Union congress meeting every two years. This congress is the supreme authority in the trade union movement. It is the final and highest trade union body in the land. The 1,300 delegates to the congress are elected at provincial congresses of the separate industrial unions. The ratio is one delegate for every 10,000 members, but any provincial department with not less than 3,000 members is entitled to one delegate. Those with over 15,000, but less than 20,000 have two delegates; those with less than 3,000 join in joint election congresses called by the provincial or regional trades councils. The ratio of delegates from these special joint congresses, called, of course, in the less populous districts, is the same as that for the separate provincial congresses.

The inter-union provincial and regional organizations, as such, have no delegates with deciding voices in the C. C. T. U. congress, but they may each send one delegate with consulting voice. The Moscow provincial council of trade unions, for example, has one delegate in the All-Union congress.

< The headquarters of the C. C. T. U., as we have noted, is, together with the central committees of the twenty-three national unions, in the Labor Palace in Moscow. It carries on the same type of activities as the provincial inter-union councils just described, only its field of supervision and coordination is the whole trade union movement of the Soviet Republics. Its departments are similar to those found in the headquarters of the provincial union and inter-union organizations and national unions. Its publications are more numerous and its other activities proportionate in number and size to its wider field of operation.

The constitution of the C. C. T. U., adopted at the

Fifth Congress in 1922, is a simple document of about three hundred and fifty words. It defines its duties very sketchily as follows:

(a) To govern the whole trade union movement in Russia in accordance with the decisions taken by the Congress and to direct the activity of the All-Russian industrial unions and inter-union federations.

(b) To encourage the development of the trade union movement by written and oral propaganda.

(c) Through its delegates in the Red Trade Union International (*Profintern*) to participate in the international labor movement.

(d) To carry out the work necessary for the preparation and convening of All-Russian congresses.

(e) To fix the date for the convening of conferences and congresses.

The constitution states further that the C. C. T. U.

(a) Shall represent the proletariat organized in trade unions in all governmental and public organizations and institutions.

(b) Shall draft all legislation for the defense of the economic and cultural-educational interests of the trade unionists, and shall take measures to have these bills passed by the competent government departments.

Orders and instructions of the C. C. T. U., the constitution goes on to say, are binding on all lower inter-union federations and national unions. The rest of the

constitution deals with the regulations concerning the selection of the presidium, the auditing committee and other officers. At the last All-Union congress, held in December, 1926, the Central Council, consisting of 168 members and 91 alternates, was elected. This council, in turn, elected the presidium of 15 members with 7 alternates. M. Tomskey is Chairman and A. Dogadov, Secretary of the presidium. This is the group of men that speaks for the Russian trade union movement in all matters, both at home and abroad, according to the principles laid down at the All-Russian congresses.

Having completed our brief survey of the somewhat complicated trade union structure, we may review the steps we have taken from the factory up to the C. C. T. U. (See diagram on the facing page).

1. The factory committee (*fabkom*)—the basic unit in the union—we have examined on the spot in a textile factory, the textile union having been chosen to illustrate the structure of the industrial union.

2. The next step, the *ooyezd* (county), we have only mentioned. It exists outside the urban centers with its conferences and administrative offices. But it has no financial autonomy, and is subordinate to the next highest body, the provincial department.

3. This provincial department (other names being used in some of the republics, autonomous areas and regions of the U. S. S. R.) organizes all union work in its territory. The *fabkoms* and county departments report to it.

4. At the apex of the structure comes the national administration of the union with its Central Committee.

UNION ORGANIZATION SCHEME

INTER-UNION ORGANIZATION

'ORGANIZATION OF A SINGLE INDUSTRIAL UNION

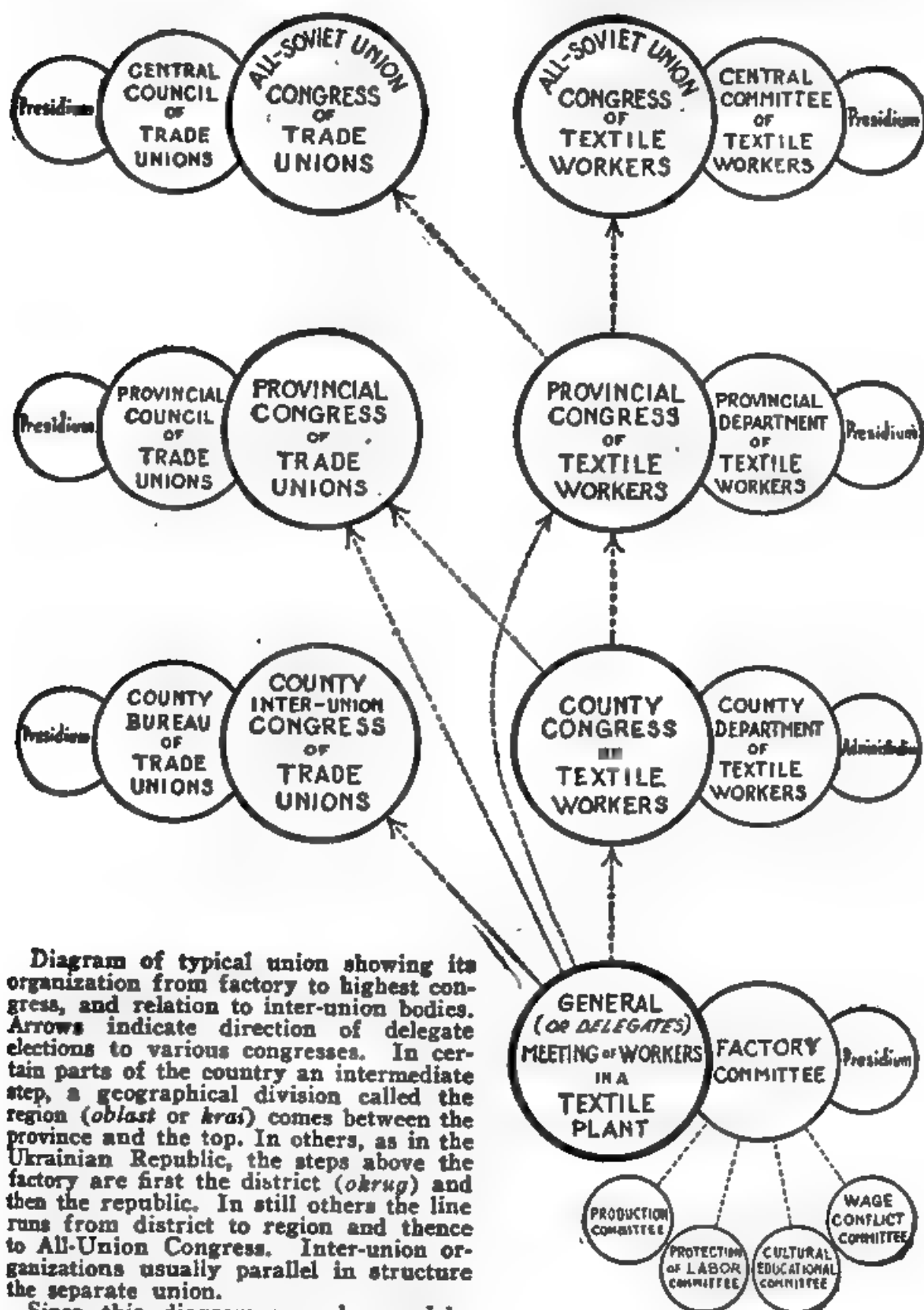


Diagram of typical union showing its organization from factory to highest congress, and relation to inter-union bodies. Arrows indicate direction of delegate elections to various congresses. In certain parts of the country an intermediate step, a geographical division called the region (*oblast* or *krai*) comes between the province and the top. In others, as in the Ukrainian Republic, the steps above the factory are first the district (*okrug*) and then the republic. In still others the line runs from district to region and thence to All-Union Congress. Inter-union organizations usually parallel in structure the separate union.

Since this diagram was drawn delegates to national congresses have begun to be elected directly from the factories (see footnote, page 177).

5. The inter-union organizations, we have noted, are organized at each stage: the county bureau; the provincial trades council, which we have described; and finally, the powerful All-Russian Congress with its C. C. T. U.

This is the system as it runs through the U. S. S. R. The names of the geographical units vary; the names of the union departments vary for a few of the unions. But the distribution of power is similar; the election of the delegates to congresses is the same; the method of electing the central committees and presidiums is uniform for the whole country.

SECTIONS

Although the Russian unions are built on the "one shop—one union" principle and no craft unions exist, there are within them certain sections which combine the workers of a given profession or occupation. We find, for example, the engineers and technical men organized into sections at all levels of the trade union structure. They are united at the top into a central body, known as the Inter-union Bureau of Engineers and Technicians of the C. C. T. U. Membership is entirely voluntary and funds are set aside from the dues of these members to cover their particular work. They usually have their own special technical magazines.

The purpose of such a section is to unite those men of higher education and skill into bodies that will serve their specific needs and help them to maintain a fruitful interest in their work. These sections have been very effective in drawing technical men into the union production conferences, which we shall describe later, as

well as into the general life of the union. Persons are admitted who are actually engaged in engineering and technical work in state industries, and those who have received higher special education in the U. S. S. R. or abroad.

These sections hold their own congresses nationally as well as provincially; they have executive bureaus elected at these congresses. However, decisions of section bodies have to be confirmed by the governing body of the union, as a whole, before they become effective. Over 500 delegates attended one of the congresses convened in 1927 by the Inter-Union Bureau of Engineers and Technicians of the C. C. T. U. Reports to this congress show over 105,000 members in the sections, an increase of 156 percent in two and a half years.

Other typical sections within particular unions are the press writers' section of the typographical union, the doctors' section of the public health workers' union, the scientific workers' section of the educational workers' union, the mercantile employees' section, and the statisticians' and accountants' section of the soviet and commercial employees' union. Although the educational workers' union includes everyone in the whole educational system—even the janitors and locksmiths of the schools and universities—a special section of professors and scientific workers of institutions, such as museums, libraries and laboratories, has been organized. Its membership is about 14,000, with branches in some fifty towns and cities. The accomplishments of this section include raising of the salaries of scientific workers, improvement of their housing conditions, establishment of pensions for them, and the direction of special cultural activities.

In addition to these professional units, a new type of section was authorized at the last All-Union Congress

of Trade Unions in 1926. Because many of the present national unions comprise such a wide number of industries—the food workers, for example, uniting workers in flour mills, slaughter-houses, candy factories, bakeries, fish canneries, tobacco factories, etc.—it was believed that special work might best be carried on in these separate industries through sections. The work of negotiating collective agreements will also be facilitated by them. “However”, says the official *Trade Union Bulletin* of the C. C. T. U., “the sections must not be regarded as an initial step toward dividing the unions or turning the sections into independent bodies. The sections must be created within a union as auxiliary bodies which can better examine into the special industrial and living conditions of the members and serve them more satisfactorily”. The separate unions are given discretion to establish these industrial sections, but they can only be created by decisions of national congresses of the unions involved and with the approval of the C. C. T. U. It should also be noted that these divisions are not being created on craft lines, but follow rather industrial divisions. They are introduced chiefly for the purpose of training new talent and for drawing into more practical union work those who have not been able to function easily in the large, unwieldy, somewhat artificial organization of a few of the present unions.

UNION FINANCES

In discussing the structure and inter-union relationships of the unions we may also include a word on their finances. Perhaps the story may best be told by following through the dues from the time they are paid into the hands of the dues collector until they are expended

at various points along the way to the C. C. T. U.

All members pay a uniform two percent of their monthly wages as dues, and an initiation fee equal to a half day's wages on entering the union. This is considered a more equitable system than the flat payment for workers of all wage groups, prevailing in most American unions. American workers may pay more or less of their monthly wages for dues and entrance fees than the Russian workers. For in the United States initiations range from 50 cents to \$250 and dues from 50 cents to \$7 a month. It depends upon the union involved. For example, the American bricklayer will pay more than ten times the entrance fee of the Russian bricklayer, but once admitted, his monthly contributions are somewhat lower in proportion to his wages than those in Russia. On the other hand printers in the typographical trades in the United States will pay higher dues than their brothers in Russia, the rate here being from two to two and one-half percent of the monthly wages plus \$1.20 when employed. Food workers in New York City, on the other hand, pay about the same initiation fees as Russian workers but their monthly dues will come to a somewhat lower percentage of their wages. There is little uniformity, and comparisons are difficult to make.

The dues are paid voluntarily in the Russian unions. A regular dues collector takes them and turns them over, through the factory committee, to the provincial department of the union. As we have noted, the intermediate county department of the union, where it exists, is carried on the budget of the provincial organization and does not handle the dues.

Having received the dues from the fabkoms, the provincial office sets aside certain sums for educational

work, for unemployment, for operating expenses and for other purposes. However, before it does this it pays ten percent of its receipts to support the provincial inter-union organization. It also pays from five to twenty-five percent of its income to the treasury of the national union. In some unions the weaker districts pay nothing to the national body. In the metal workers' union, for example, only thirty out of eighty of the industrial districts (they are called *rayons* instead of provinces in the metal workers' organization) contribute to the national treasury, the percentage to be paid by each being worked out by the Central Committee. The present average payment for the thirty paying districts is about 17 percent of the total dues received.

What happens to the funds thus received by the central committees of the national unions? First they pay from ten to fifteen percent of their income to the C. C. T. U., just as the provincial departments pay ten percent to the central trades councils. After they have paid this the central committees set aside certain funds for strikes, for educational work, for unemployment, for student assistance, for international relations, Rest Homes, sanitarium relief and a number of other purposes.

What then does the union member get back in return for his dues? The provincial departments estimate that they give at least fifty percent of their income back in direct benefits to the workers. They also aim to keep their administrative expenses as low as possible. The metal workers in Leningrad district, for example, point out that they spent only thirteen percent on their administrative apparatus last year, while the textile workers spent fourteen percent, the chemical workers nineteen percent, and the soviet employees' union

twenty percent. In Moscow province the average for all the twenty-three departments was about eighteen percent. A similar effort is made by the inter-union bodies, as well as the central committees, to have as large a portion of their income as possible returned to the workers in direct or indirect benefits.

At every stage of the trade union structure, from the fabkom to the C. C. T. U., auditing committees or boards of trustees are elected by the membership. They consist of from three to five members with two or three alternates. They are usually elected every three months and audit the books not less than once during that period. Members of the union administration are, of course, not elected to these committees. Their work is usually done in non-working hours and without compensation. Reports are rendered periodically to the general meetings, conferences and congresses of the union.

A budget compiled January 1, 1927, on returns from national industrial unions representing more than eighty-five percent of the total union membership of the U. S. S. R., showed that receipts from membership dues alone for the preceding year had totalled about \$50,000,000. About \$15,000,000 of this had gone into maintenance of staff, and an equally large amount into special funds such as those enumerated above.

The provincial departments of the same number of industrial unions had expended during 1926 about \$7,500,000 in unemployment funds, while the cultural-educational fund account of the same organizations showed an expenditure during 1926 of about \$25,000,000. In addition to this, we have the various provincial inter-union organizations with, naturally, smaller incomes. Reports from seventy-five percent of them showed an income for 1926 of about \$5,500,000.

Because their funds are not drained away in expensive strikes, lock-outs, injunctions, legal fees and other items that bulk so large in the balance sheets of trade unions in other countries, the Russian unions, as a whole, are becoming wealthy organizations. They can afford, as we shall note later, to make substantial contributions to support the workers of other lands in their struggles.

In addition to their own funds, the unions also administer funds received from the industries. First, there is the fund for the support of the factory committee, which is a fixed percentage of the total payroll. Secondly, there is the amount paid, under the collective agreement, for educational and cultural purposes, as well as the subsidies for technical education also paid by the enterprises. Finally, the funds for the "improvement of the worker's life," which amount to ten percent of the profits of the trusts, are administered by the unions. Excluding this last item which varies greatly from year to year, and from trust to trust, the *Trade Union Bulletin* of October, 1927, estimates that the total annual income of the Soviet trade unions now exceeds seventy-five million dollars.

CHAPTER VII

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

MAKING collective agreements with the boss—either the state boss or the private boss—is one of the chief jobs of the Soviet trade unions since the introduction of the NEP. Most of the bosses are governmental corporations or trusts. A few of them are private owners. But whoever they are, they deal with a union and enter into collective agreements with it. These agreements are not compulsory, but they are generally used in all establishments.

The task of drawing up such agreements is greatly simplified by the fact that there are a few large industrial unions instead of a number of petty, craft unions. One employer is not required, as in America, to sign agreements with the machinists, the pattern-makers, the molders and the blacksmiths. If it is a state trust engaged in metal manufacture, it signs with the national union of metal workers. If the state trust makes cakes and bonbons, it signs with the food workers' union, and no other. If it makes rubber goloshes, it signs only with the chemical workers' union.

The Labor Code of Soviet Russia provides that the terms of any collective agreement shall apply to all persons employed by the enterprise, whether they are members of the union or not. It provides also that the period for which agreements shall run is to be fixed by

the Commissariat of Labor in agreement with the C. C. T. U. Since the stabilization of the rouble in 1924, most agreements have been made for twelve months. They are usually made sometime after the year's economic reports are in hand so as to profit by the financial reports of the trusts. All agreements are registered at the Commissariat of Labor and are enforceable in the law courts. It is also understood that the Labor Code contains the minimum conditions for every collective agreement. The agreement can grant better conditions, but it cannot go below those provided for in the code.

Most collective agreements are called local agreements and are made by the provincial councils of the separate industrial unions. A few, which are known as national or general agreements, such as those made in connection with mining, or the railroads, may be made by the central committee of the national union involved. The inter-union councils and the C. C. T. U. do not make agreements.

The most typical agreement in Russia is thus a one-year contract between a provincial department of a separate union, as the Moscow Provincial Department of the Textile Union, and a trust, like the administration of the Second State Cotton Trust. Some twelve enterprises—separate factories of the trust—are involved in this agreement, and over 47,000 workers. A similar agreement will be made between the same union and the Moscow Cotton Trust or between the union and the Moscow State Trust of the Multi-Colored Weaving Industry. In any one of these typical agreements you will find a detailed statement of the number of factories involved, conditions covering hiring and firing of workers, and conditions concerning reduction of staff or liquidation of any factory included in the agreement.

Following these points come important sections dealing with wages, production standards and piece work. For example, in the Multi-Colored Weaving Trust agreement we find that after the usual seventeen wage categories (to be described later) are stipulated, and the differentials between each category designated, the agreement provides that a worker can be demoted from a higher grade to a lower grade if (1) he is not efficient enough to do the work for which he is being paid, (2) when there is not enough work in the higher category for him to do. If he consents to the lower scale, he receives the higher scale for two weeks after he has begun work on the lower scale. If he does not consent, he may be dismissed but receives two weeks' wages based on his higher scale. Of course, he can always appeal to the wage-conflict committee in the factory in case he thinks he has been done an injustice.

It is also stated, in this typical local agreement, that the trust must provide the workers with all the houses that it happens to own, together with water and janitor services free. In case the trust has insufficient houses for its workers, it must give them a money allowance for rent which is stipulated in the agreement. It is also provided that workers who live more than a mile and a half from their work, and who receive less than a certain amount of wages a month, shall receive free transportation to and from their place of employment.

In addition to this, there are clauses stating that the wages shall be paid twice monthly, as well as sections dealing in detail with the payment of piece and time rates. One paragraph states that rates and standards of output are to apply during the life of the agreement and that piece rates shall be changed only if the factory is reorganized and technical conditions changed. In

that case, the trust and the union together must examine the piece rates, which may be considered too high in comparison with those for other groups of piece workers. It is also provided that if a worker is prevented from working, by some cause external to himself, he must receive the average pay which he earns when working on piece rates.

After a number of paragraphs dealing with spoilage in connection with piece rate work, we come to another section which provides that overtime work is not ordinarily allowed, but if there should be any it must be approved by the labor inspector and the trade unions. Payment for overtime shall be as follows: The first two hours to be paid at time and one half; overtime after two hours receiving double time. This applies also to holidays.

Then we come to the section in this agreement dealing with "labor defense and special welfare". Some of the clauses here, like those we have cited above, are mere confirmations of the conditions required by the Labor Code. In dangerous trades, indicated by instructions of the Commissariat of Labor, the worker puts in six hours but receives eight hours wages. The factory must furnish special work clothes and food to protect the worker against poisons in these trades. It must also provide proper ventilation and guards for the machinery. After five and a half months the worker is entitled to his two weeks vacation with full pay. Those in dangerous trades, such as mining, receive one month, and young workers always receive one month or more. If the worker is discharged he receives compensation for the vacation coming to him.

There is also a section in which the administration of the factory agrees to provide a dining room for the

workers, and nurseries for their children, (sometimes a barbershop, a dispensary and similar facilities will also be stipulated in the agreement) while one fourth of one percent of the total payroll must be given for water, light, sanitation and the repairing of these institutions.

The agreement then provides that apprentices will be trained up to eight percent of the working force, and that workers who teach apprentices on the job shall receive extra payments equal to about 30 percent of the wages of the apprentice who is being taught. The trust also promises to pay for the factory schools in certain of its eighteen factories, and for other specially named schools for younger unskilled workers, as well as for older workers.

This agreement, like practically all those of its type, calls for a payment of 10 percent of the trust's profits to a fund for "the improvement of the life" of workers. This fund is administered by the union. Seventy-five percent of the amount, as we have noted, goes to housing, the remainder for clubs, theatres, libraries and similar purposes.

As for the shop rules of the enterprises, the agreement states that these will be worked out by the administration of the factory and the local factory committees, and that copies shall be ratified by the local inspector of the Commissariat of Labor and shall then be posted throughout the factory.

These are some of the outstanding provisions in a typical agreement. They vary from union to union and trust to trust, depending upon the relative bargaining strength, the industry involved, the size of the factory units, the skill of the negotiations and other more or less fortuitous factors. The variations are too numerous to mention or to explain. Why, for example, is

there not in the agreement we have just sketched a clause like that in the general agreement concluded between the Central Committee of the Chemical Workers' Union and the Board of Directors of the Rubber Trust, which reads: "The trust must maintain a drug store properly supplied with medicaments and first aid appliances". Or why should this clause appear in the agreement made between the Moscow Provincial Branch of the Food Workers' Union and the Moscow Organization of Consumers' Societies (Cooperatives) and not in the textile agreement just cited: "If the working force is reduced by more than five people the consent of the union [the provincial organization] must be obtained. For less than five the consent of the factory committee is sufficient".

Sometimes, as in the case of the food workers' agreement with the cooperatives, the agreement will cover a number of different kinds of factories, in which case special provisions have to be inserted concerning, for example, the teaching of apprentices in large candy factories as compared with the method to be employed in small bakeries and sausage factories. Or the agreement may have clauses concerning the provision of meals to various kinds of workers: "At the sausage factories workers must be given a free dinner on working days costing not over 40 kopeks, or compensation may be given in lieu of it at cost. . . . All employees of the first ten categories in bakeries receive 5 roubles, 50 kopeks monthly as a special allowance for food. In poultry abattoirs the allowance is 7 roubles, 50 kopeks monthly."

AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE FIRMS

Special clauses are inserted when the union makes the agreement with a private concern. In such agreements

the administrative personnel and technical men are not included as they are in agreements drawn with state concerns.

The private concern has to grant as many concessions to the workers as the state trust, and usually about ten percent more in one form or another. Like the state concern, the private employer must hire all his workers through the labor exchange, and take union members first, so long as qualified ones can be obtained. The enterprise must notify the shop committee within three days after a new worker is hired. The factory committee can reject him if it has a good reason, but after his regular trial period of six days elapses, he is automatically accepted as a worker. In case of reductions, non-union members go first as in state enterprises. On the whole, the conditions with regard to the company's relation to the factory committee are about the same as for state concerns. Here is an extract from an agreement made between our Moscow trade union and a certain textile company hiring 550 workers in two factories:

The firm is obliged on the request of the factory committee

1. To give to the workers a receipt covering the payment of social insurance and other insurance.
2. To give it a copy of the pay roll with all the wage payments in any form determined upon in agreement with the committee.
3. To give information about the general output of the factory and the output of each worker.

These provisions suggest one great advantage enjoyed by the "wage-economic" departments of the Russian unions when they come to negotiate agreements either

with state or private enterprises. Either directly or through the factory committee they have unrestricted access to all books of the company, both its wage tables and its production sheets. They are thus in a position to know exactly what the enterprise can pay, and to conduct their negotiations accordingly.

To the agreement with the private firm, which we have just cited, are added certain special points which appear to be typical of agreements made with such firms:

In case of death or injury during working hours, the firm is obliged to pay the family of the worker. in one payment, two months wages.

The firm is obliged to free workers who are studying in the liquidation of illiteracy schools, three times a week for two hours; if they work instead, they must be paid time and one-half for these hours.

There is also the stipulation that for the upkeep of the factory committee the firm shall pay 2.12 percent (another private firm signing practically the same agreement paid as high as 3.11 percent) of the total wage bill. Attached to the agreement is an additional sheet containing the exact specifications as to special clothing to be provided workers in certain departments.

WORKERS' PARTICIPATION

As agreements are usually made for one year, the workers have about a month and a half or two months each year in which to discuss them. And they do—in departmental meetings, factory committees, delegates' meetings, shift meetings, general meetings and produc-

tion conferences. Although the agreements are tentative, usually drawn up by the wage experts of the provincial union, the workers in the shop provide the meat of the amendments and many concrete propositions that appear in the finished draft. One should not exaggerate the part that workers take in the preliminary and purely technical side of the negotiations. But one can scarcely overemphasize the fact that, as a rule, they give the agreements the most thorough and vigorous discussion during the "collective agreement campaigns," as they are called.

"As long as the wage system exists in any country," says Chairman Tomskey of the C. C. T. U., commenting on the dissatisfaction expressed by some of the workers during one of these campaigns, "the worker will naturally demand higher wages than he receives. It is the duty of the trade union to know the industry and each factory unit and its possibilities for meeting the demands of the workers." By a free and frank discussion of the agreement, the workers themselves gradually become familiar with these possibilities. The more discussion the better, is the opinion of the trade union leaders.

The meetings called to discuss the new agreements in 1925 were attended by from 47 to 96 percent of the workers involved, and from 7 to 12 percent of those present took part in the discussion.

Those who in recent years have attended meetings where the new agreements were being thrashed over, have commented on the spirited fashion in which the rank and file expresses itself. The meetings are called, usually in the auditorium of the factory club, for the sole purpose of taking up the agreement point by point. No other business is allowed to intrude. The factory

manager is often called on the carpet to defend his position before the workers. The debate is sometimes sharp, but seldom boisterous; it is usually sober and businesslike. When the workers have voted on the provisions of the agreement, it is formally ratified and is then ready to be signed by the trade union officials and the management. Once the agreement is adopted and in force, it is printed by the thousands, distributed to the workers and posted on bulletin boards in every room of the factory.

THE LABOR CONTRACT

Any discussion of collective agreements should also mention the "labor contract" concluded between two or more persons, usually two. It must be made even when there is a collective agreement, but does not have to be written. It is, therefore, in most cases not a formal agreement, but merely means that the two parties are in such relationship that one is paying and the other is working. However, there are certain exceptions when this contract must be written. This is in the case of hired farm workers, domestic and household workers, apprentices in the *kustar* (home work) industry, so-called "artels" and industrial cooperatives, and, finally, officials of government institutions who are receiving wages above the norm. In such cases a written contract is required by law. To workers who have these contracts, oral or written, and who are not covered by a collective agreement, the employer must give a "working book" in which the general terms of the contract are written. The general form of the book is decided by the Commissariat of Labor. The worker takes the book with him when he leaves his job. It

helps him later in securing state insurance benefits and in getting his proper wage category in his next job.

The largest number of unionized workers with this type of contract are in agriculture and in the food supply trades—58.9 and 39 percent respectively. The agricultural workers' union helps both union and non-union workers to make these contracts. Through this assistance the isolated farm worker is introduced to the union, becomes acquainted with its affairs, and is likely, as a result, to become a member. The duty of the union is to see that at least the minimum wage for the farm labor set by the Labor Commissariat is paid in these contracts.

COVERAGE OF AGREEMENTS

In January, 1925, the number of organized workers in the Soviet Union covered by both collective agreements and individual labor contracts, was 86 percent; in January, 1926, it was 87 percent. In January, 1927, it was 89.5 percent. On that date the number of organized workers in the industries covered by agreements was 97.2 percent, in transportation and communication 98.4 percent, while the employees of institutions and commercial enterprises were less adequately covered—only 79.1 percent. Teachers and medical workers were also comparatively poorly covered. Practically all the textile workers and railroad workers were working under collective agreements even in January, 1926, and the percentage for metal workers, miners and chemical workers was 97.3, 98.2 and 98.1 respectively ¹.

¹ *Report of the C.C.T.U. to the Seventh Trade Union Congress, 1926, p. 188.*

The number of organized workers covered by 83,689 collective agreements on January 31, 1927, was 6,520,300, while 167,100 workers were covered by 129,641 labor contracts, some of these, as we have noted, covering more than one worker. The number of workers covered by collective agreements has been rising, while the number covered by labor contracts has been declining in recent years.

The distribution of workers protected by general agreements, as distinguished from those working under local agreements, is interesting. On January 1, 1927, there were 94 general agreements embracing 2,226,000 workers and 78,350 local agreements covering 4,271,000 workers. The number of workers covered by both types of agreements had increased each year since 1925.

FIXING WAGES

In dealing with collective agreements we must also consider briefly how wage rates are fixed. Just what power has the union, locally and nationally, to determine the amount of wages received by its members?

The fixing of wages in Soviet Russia today is a somewhat complicated process in which the unions, as we shall note, play their due part. Five characteristics of this wage situation may be summarized as follows:

1. The workers are divided into wage categories. Up to 1927, there were 17 of these for all workers in all industries. At present, a change is being made in the classifications which we shall describe.

2. The amount of the industrial budget to be allotted for wages is determined annually in advance by the State Economic Planning Commis-

sion (*Gosplan*) in consultation with the unions. The unions, conferring among themselves and with the state economic organs, decide what amounts can be allotted for wages to each specific industry.

3. In recent years the chemical, textile, clothing and food industries that have enjoyed a more rapid growth and greater prosperity, have been able to advance wages faster than the mining and metal industries that have been less flourishing. They have also been able to devote larger sums to housing and the social welfare of the employees.

4. Skilled workers receive a proportionately higher wage than in other countries. But the recent tendency is to even up the wages of the less skilled and to bring closer together the wages of the piece worker and the time worker. There has also been a distinct tendency to equalize wages as between industries, as compared with the pre-war differentials.

5. Finally, the rise in wages for all categories of work is conditional upon the general increase in production in the industries, the growth of commerce and the spread of economic prosperity.

Let us examine these elements of the wage fixing problem in more detail. In 1922 the C. C. T. U. worked out a classification for wage payments, which grouped the workers into seventeen categories. The highly skilled worker in the seventeenth category received exactly eight times the wage of the apprentice in the first category. Having established the monthly base rate for the highest and lowest category, the others were paid according to a table of coefficients worked out by each separate national union. Each union classified the va-

rious jobs into these seventeen categories. For example, in the metal industry some 3,000 jobs had to be assigned to the appropriate category.

In order to secure general uniformity in the classification of jobs and the payment of wages to workers of the same skill, as between one industry and another, the C. C. T. U. and the provincial trades council held wage conferences to coordinate the work of the several unions.

In the first two categories were usually put apprentices; in those from three to ten the manual workers. Above that, up to seventeen, came the supervisory and technical staff. Special agreements were usually made with the unions for the most highly skilled managers and technicians whereby they received wages above the seventeenth category.

Believing that greater flexibility is needed in determining wages, the C. C. T. U. is now establishing a new wage scale "net". This will divide the wage earners into four classes—workers, clerks, apprentices and the engineering and technical personnel. Within each of these four classes there will be a varying number of categories depending upon the industry and the character of the jobs within it. The new classification will make it possible to determine wages more accurately in relation to the amount of skill in each industry and occupation. The worker group will contain from six to eight categories, the minimum and maximum payment maintaining a ratio of about one to three. The clerks will have up to twelve categories, the apprentices from four to six, and the engineers and technicians up to sixteen. The ratio of the minimum and the maximum will vary for each group.

Just as with the former classification, each union will work out its own categories and their relationships with-

in each group. That is the main job of the union, once it has settled with the state economic organs what the total wage is to be for a given period. The union's task consists in distributing this wage as equitably as possible among its constituency.

The methods used to fix wages in the various industries are as follows: The total amount of the industrial funds to go to wages each year is fixed by Gosplan. This body surveys the plans and profits of all the industries, coordinates them, and then cooperates with the unions and the heads of the industries in working out the total wage increase possible for the year.

The central committees of the national industrial unions, through their wage departments, work out the general increases they think they ought to receive in the new agreements. Then these committees confer with the wage department of the C. C. T. U., and a general plan for wage increases in all the unions is prepared.

When this is done union representatives go to Gosplan and fight for the increases that have been tentatively determined upon. The Gosplan takes into consideration the country as a whole, all its industries and their achievements. It works out with the unions the general increases to be made. The final determination of the percentages for each industry usually follows the original claims made by the various national unions as coordinated by the C. C. T. U. Should the Gosplan and the unions be unable to agree, the whole question will be referred for further discussion and settlement to the Council of People's Commissars and the C. C. T. U. As we shall observe later, the unions are represented on the Supreme Council of National Economy, the Council of Labor and Defense, the Commissariat of Labor and all governmental economic bodies that confer with

Gosplan when it is engaged in its work of determining the wage increases.

The provincial department of the union plays an important part in the working out of the wages. It is represented in conferences called by the Central Committee of the national union before it brings up its demands to the state economic bodies. Later, when the general increase is set for the industry, it helps to determine the amount each trust and factory is to receive. The local factory committee has more authority over this matter than one might suppose. In cooperation with the wage-experts of the provincial department it thrashes out all questions concerning wage classifications, piece work, output, spoilage, time studies, etc., for the particular factory. This is indeed one of the most important duties of the fabkom. To the collective agreement made between the trust and the union is always attached the list of wage rates to be paid in each factory of the trust. Working out all the variations within one factory is one of the hardest jobs given to the wage-conflict subcommittee of the fabkom.

Although wages in certain industries which we have mentioned have increased faster than those in others, it can be said that the lighter and more prosperous industries are now slowing down somewhat in the rate of wage advances. Their workers seem to be willing to see a large part of the profit of these industries go into the economic budget of the country to be used as capital for heavy industries.

The reason for the disproportionately high wages paid to skilled workers in all industries is due primarily to the scarcity of skilled labor caused by the high mortality rate of these workers during the Revolution and the Civil War. The Red Army drew the most skilled

and efficient men to its colors. And large numbers of them have also been promoted to administrative jobs in the government. Political work of all kinds has absorbed them. Hence the unions and the industries have been compelled to offer unusual inducements to skilled workers.

As we have suggested, the unions and the government are taking steps to reduce the difference in wages between the "qualified" and the "unqualified" workers. This also involves an effort to bring nearer the wages of the time workers and the piece workers. Piece workers have been receiving a much larger share of the wage fund than time workers, and have, in fact, increased both their output and their earnings quite steadily in recent years. The need for the increase in the productivity of industry led to the introduction of piece work and from 60 to 70 percent of the industrial workers are now paid by this method. Even three-fourths of the building trades workers are on piece work. Various methods have recently been employed to bring piece rates nearer to day rates. In some places hour rates have been made to vary with the output, and hence with piece earnings. Group piece rates for a whole department are also employed, as are special forms of bonuses for time workers.

While the Communists, and the labor unions generally, are opposed to piece rates in capitalist countries on the ground that the employers are the chief beneficiaries of such systems, they contend that under the Soviet government the workers do share in the output of industry as production increases. Piece rates in Russia, however, are regarded only as a temporary necessity. The union leaders believe that as industry is mechanized, and the cooperative spirit of the workers strengthened, time

rates will gradually replace the present piece rate system. All this is, of course, contingent on the industrialization of the country and the rapidity of the steps taken along the road toward socialism.

STATE EMPLOYEES

In the above paragraphs we have been discussing only those workers who are employed in government trusts and other establishments operated on a commercial and self-supporting basis. How about the workers in the regular government departments, the school teachers, the civil servants generally?

Still another method is used in fixing the salaries of these workers. The practice is to hold a conference of representatives of the union involved, the department of the government involved, the Commissariat of Labor, the Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection (the supreme auditing and control department of the government) and the C. C. T. U. This conference determines what the minimum shall be for each job. It simply defines the job and sets the basic rate.

This rate may not be the same for all government departments and offices. For example, a bookkeeper in the Finance Department may have a more responsible task than one engaged by the Commissariat of Agriculture. A typist in the State Bank may have more exacting duties than one working in the office of the Moscow Soviet. Each institution has jobs peculiar to its own work. And for each of these the rate is set by the appropriate conference.

A recent bulletin of the C. C. T. U. states that this new system of fixing salaries will tend to even up the lower salaries of the workers in the provinces. It also

declares that "the unions are sufficiently represented in the various bodies which examine and approve the budget (national or local) and in general have ample opportunity to protect the interests of their members, both when determining the staffs and when fixing the level of wages. . . . The trade unions come to an agreement with the respective state organs regarding the salaries of employees in national and local institutions. The functions of trade union organizations in the realm of wage regulations are not infringed upon, but are somewhat changed." It is thought that the conditions of those at present receiving lower salaries will be improved through this system.

PRESENT WAGES

Russian wages were always low. The wages fixed in these collective agreements are still low as compared with American wage levels. In order to understand the wages paid in Soviet industry and transportation—which now average about \$34 a month (the average wage in Moscow industries is about \$44)—one must make comparisons not with American wages today but with Russian pre-war wages.

The results of investigations made by Paul H. Douglas for the unofficial delegation of American trade unionists to the Soviet Union in the summer of 1927, show that real wages for industrial workers had by July, 1927, increased about 12 percent over the year 1913. But this does not include important "additions to wages" in the form of social insurance, vacations with pay, free rents for at least 20 percent of the workers, medical attention, and a number of other services for which the workers had to pay in the years before the Revolution. Some of these we have mentioned in Chapter I.

Making allowance for these various additions, Douglas concludes "that the Russian industrial workers are receiving approximately 35 percent more commodities and services" than in 1913, together "with at least a 25 percent shorter working week. This means that for each hour of working time they are obtaining approximately 80 percent more purchasing power than before. It is, therefore, not an exaggeration to state that in no country, since the World War, have the industrial wage earners made the relative progress which has recently been made in Russia".²

Wages of Russian workers have been steadily increasing and will doubtless continue to rise with the growing industrialization of the country and the gains that are being recorded in the productivity of the workers. That the workers are decidedly better off than they were before the war, in spite of the enormous difficulties that have stood in the way of peaceful economic building, is, of course, cause for rejoicing on the part of the friends of Soviet Russia. But the trade unions themselves are by no means satisfied with this progress. They want to push wages and consuming power steadily upward. The seven-hour day to be introduced is not expected to slow down productivity, which has more than doubled in the last five years. It will certainly mean no decrease in wages. The Russian trade union leaders say they have only begun to tap the resources that, when properly developed, will mean for all those who work in the country a greatly elevated standard of living.

² *Russia After Ten Years*, Report of the American Trade Union Delegation to the Soviet, p. 37. A much fuller discussion of wages by Paul Douglas will appear in the forthcoming report of the technical and advisory staff of this delegation, to be called *Soviet Russia in the Second Decade*.

CHAPTER VIII

LABOR DISPUTES AND THEIR SETTLEMENT

UNDER an economic system—no matter what its name—where unions deal with state trusts and private companies, making collective agreements with them, causes of disputes and strikes are bound to arise. In connection with the fixing of wages and all the manifold matters that are dealt with in the agreements, real differences of opinion and conflicts of interest develop. The first question one asks in talking with soviet union leaders is, "What method do you have for settling disputes, and do you have regular strikes in your industries even under your workers' government?"

< The answer to these questions will usually be preceded by the statement that after the October Revolution, or at least from the middle of 1918, strikes in Russia were few and far between. There was no law against strikes, but in the continual state of crisis that confronted the government up to the end of the civil wars any outbreak of this kind was frowned upon by the unions and considered as virtual counter-revolution by the government. There is no doubt that the enemies of the soviets did what they could to foment strikes during those trying days. But the unions, as we have seen, were in the front line trenches of the fight against the White Guards, and probably knew how to deal with those who resorted to measures of this kind.

The whole situation, as we have noted, changed with the end of war communism and the inauguration of the NEP. When private firms were reestablished, when capitalist business procedure was used by the new state trusts, when collective agreements began to be made with these industries, labor disputes were once more in order. The unions were reorganized to defend the specific interests of the workers as workers against both state capitalists and the private employers. The position of the unions at this time was stated by Abraham Losovsky, a member of the presidium of the C. C. T. U.

"In so far as state enterprises have been commercialized and entered into competition with private enterprises which may bring about a greater tendency to exploit labor, the trade unions have resumed their normal function of protecting the interests of the workers also, if need be, against the state as employer. . . . We shall resort to strikes, to boycotts, and to all methods of direct action which the international labor movement has created, every time that the interests of the workers seem to require their application."¹

The relation of the union to strikes under the new economic regime was widely discussed at the time. A statement on this subject which Lenin helped to draft late in 1921 was approved by the C. C. T. U. It read in part:

"The Soviet Power and the Trade Unions must never forget and never conceal from the working masses the truth that the use of the strike weapon

¹ "The New Economic Policy and the Trade Unions," *Survey Graphic*, March 1, 1923.

in a State with a proletarian government can be explained and justified solely either by the bureaucratic perversion of the proletarian Government, by the prevalence of the vestiges of capitalism in its institutions, or by the undeveloped political condition, or the cultural backwardness of the working masses.

"Hence, when friction and conflicts arise between some groups of workers and some institutions or organizations of the Workers' Government, the business of the Trade Unions is to help forward the quickest and soundest settlement of the disputes with the maximum advantages to the groups of workers whom they represent, in so far as these advantages may be brought about without a detriment to other groups and without causing any injury to the development of the Workers' State and economic life as a whole. The only sound and proper method Trade Unions can adopt in such cases is mediative participation. . . ." ²

It is this mediative work of the unions and the machinery set up for it that needs to be examined at this point. It concerns itself both with cases arising out of conflicts in connection with the making and breaking of collective agreements, as well as with direct violations of the Labor Code by employers.

The system of conciliation and arbitration begins in each factory with the wage-conflict sub-committee,³ and continues through what are known as mediation cham-

² *Labour Monthly*, Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 349, April-May, 1922.

³ This committee is often referred to as the "grievances and disputes committee" or simply the "disputes committee"—Cf. L. Guinsberg, *Conditions of Labor in the U.S.S.R.*, p. 44.

bers, boards of arbitration and the special labor sessions of the People's Court. The first-named committees, as we have noted, are composed of an equal number of persons representing management and workers. Their function is not wholly judicial. It includes the working out of norms of production, setting the order of vacations for the workers, making factory rules, fixing piece rates and classifying jobs. In addition, this committee is the organ of conciliation of first instance, its business being to solve all problems that give rise to disputes in so far as this can be done within the limits of the factory or enterprise. In large establishments where there are many departments, separate committees of this kind are organized in each department, working, of course, under the general supervision of the main committee.

This committee considers all disagreements between the factory administration and individual workers which grow out of the enforcement and interpretation of the Labor Code, as well as of the collective agreement. However, it has no right to make decisions which involve changes in the collective agreement. A case can be brought to it either from the administration, from the shop committee or from individual workers. The committee is expected to act quickly. Its decisions should be made not later than two days after a case is presented to it, and these decisions must be posted in a prominent place in the factory. All decisions of this committee are made exclusively through the agreement of both sides, and not by majority vote. One reason for this arrangement is that the committee, at least in government factories, is not considered as made up of essentially conflicting parties, but rather of persons with a common aim who look at the same question from dif-

ferent angles. Hence, no third or neutral party is considered necessary at this stage of the procedure. Thorough discussion by members of the committee in most cases leads to unanimous agreement.

If no decision is reached in this committee, the case may be carried either to the conciliation chambers or to the People's Court. Individual conflicts such as those concerning money, fines, penalties, discharges and so forth, go straight to the People's Court as do questions involving interpretations of the Labor Code. But if it is a matter arising out of changes in, or decisions concerning, the conditions of work, such as come up in the negotiation of new collective agreements—wages, bonuses, hours, piece rates—it goes to the mediation chamber.

This mediation chamber is also a committee set up by the agreement of both sides. It is created by the Commissariat of Labor, the national office if it is a general agreement, the local (provincial) office if a local agreement. It consists of an equal number of persons representing the union and the management of the trust or factory. The third person is selected by the Labor Commissariat. He has no vote, and acts merely as a mediating agent in bringing the parties to an agreement.

In case no settlement is reached in this chamber, the case goes on to another *ad hoc* body, an arbitration board also composed of an equal number from both sides and the Chairman, or Super-Arbitrator agreed upon by the two sides. The chief difference is that the Chairman here has a deciding vote in case he cannot bring the two parties to agree. Cases are usually brought to this arbitration board through agreement of the union and the management of the trust. But in certain cases arising out of the making of a new collective agreement a case may be brought by one side alone, arbitration being

compulsory on the other. The chairman, in such cases, is chosen by the Commissariat of Labor.

An arbitration decision of this board, it is important to note, has the force of a decision of the People's Court, but in case the workers' side refuses to obey it the court cannot enforce it. However, should the administration of the factory or trust refuse to obey a decision, the court has the power to enforce it.

To the People's Court directly go only cases not settled by the factory wage-conflict committee, which involve the breaking of conditions of work already fixed by law or agreement. The worker individually involved in a case of this kind can, as we have seen in describing the legal aid bureaus, ask the union to represent him in such a case. The inspector of labor (from the Commissariat of Labor) must also support the claims of the worker in a labor case of this kind.

The proportion of cases settled by the mediation chambers and arbitration boards, and in other ways, for the last few years is indicated by the following table:

| Year | Total Cases | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------|---|
| | Settled | Conciliation | Arbitration | Mixed | |
| 1923-24..... | 1,973 | 489 | 1,110 | 374 | } |
| 1924-25..... | 2,418 | 469 | 1,601 | 348 | |
| 1925-26..... | 5,257 | 858 | 3,330 | 1,069 | |

The increase in the number of disputes is attributable to the increase in the number of collective agreements made, and also to a slowing down of the rate of increase in real wages. It is interesting to note the large number of cases settled by arbitration, as compared with conciliation. For the first half of 1926, of the conflicts arising out of the making of new agreements, 83.6 per cent were settled by the arbitration boards and only

16.4 by the mediation chambers. Of other types of conflicts 57.6 percent were settled by arbitration and 42.4 percent by mediation.

The way in which wage cases coming before the chambers and boards were decided is indicated by the following table:

| <i>Percentage of Wage Cases Decided in Favor of</i> | | | |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| | <i>Union Proposals</i> | <i>Employers' Proposals</i> | <i>Compromise</i> |
| 1923-24..... | 37.4 | 21.1 | 41.4 |
| 1924-25..... | 33.8 | 21.5 | 44.7 |
| 1925-26..... | 24.4 | 28.0 | 47.6 |

Most of the conflicts coming before the conciliation and arbitration bodies in 1925, as well as in the other years mentioned, were concerned with wages. Some 67 percent of them in 1925 had to do with the height of the basic wage, and over 40 percent of them involved the contributions to be paid by the firms for cultural work, "improvement of life" funds and the like. Only about one fourth of them involved questions concerning the protection of labor such as vacations, special clothing for workers, and so on. The same general percentages obtained for the first half of the year 1926, which is the last period for which we have information on this point.

One criticism of the conciliation and arbitration machinery made by the C. C. T. U. in its report to the Seventh Trade Union congress in 1926 is that the arbitration boards are crowded with petty matters and small conflicts that ought to be settled by conciliation or by the factory wage-conflict committees. They also charge the trusts with failing in some instances to carry out the decisions of the bodies or of breaking and changing them. They assert also that in some districts the union organizations do not keep the mass of the workers suf-

ficiently informed concerning the working of the settlement machinery.

The C. C. T. U., always frank in facing the mistakes of the union apparatus, makes several observations in the same report concerning the workings of the factory wage-conflict committees. It points out that many of the disputes raised in the factory were settled too far away from the workers by the higher union organs. Instead of taking the disputes to conciliation and arbitration bodies, the unions would sometimes create a sort of union super-conciliation committee to act over a wider territory than the factory. The C. C. T. U. report also complains that in some instances the local wage-conflict committees did not have an equal number of representatives from both sides and, furthermore, that in some instances these committees felt called upon to serve one side or the other rather than to remain just and impartial, keeping the interests of both equally in mind. The C. C. T. U. report urges that these committees must not be administering and punishing organs but real settlement and conciliation bodies.

In spite of these observations, typical of the way in which all Russian trade unions criticize themselves in their official reports, the machinery of mediation and arbitration is looked upon as fairly satisfactory, and a real effort is being made to make it more responsive to the needs and desires of the union members.

STRIKES

On no subject has the anti-soviet press invented more fantastic stories than on the subject of strikes. These mythical tales confront one wherever one goes in Europe. I remember, on coming out of the Soviet Union in Sep-

tember, 1927, that my Warsaw friends were full of questions about a strike for the eight-hour day that they believed had occurred within the last fortnight in Leningrad. Troops, they told me, had been called out to shoot down the workers. It was confidently believed, in Warsaw at least, that twenty workers had been killed. At about the same time, the European press contained stories about "labor uprisings" in Minsk, Moghilev and Tula. One report had it that twenty-three "mine workers" in Tula (a city, incidentally, noted for its samovars, and situated hundreds of miles from a mine) had been killed by Red Cossacks!

None of these reports contained the slightest element of truth. Yet they persist, and seem to be most easily believed by enemies of the Bolshevik government. At the same time reliable facts concerning strikes in the Soviet Union are not difficult to obtain by anyone visiting that country. The Commissariat of Labor keeps full records not only of disputes, as we have noted, but also of strikes. And this information may be checked up by any person with a knowledge of Russian, or with the aid of a non-Communist interpreter obtainable in any Soviet city.

The following figures on strikes were given me by Adolph Rashin, head of the statistical department of the C. C. T. U.

| Year | Number of Strikes | | | Number of Strikers | | |
|----------------------------|--|---------------------------------|-------|---|-------------------------|--------|
| | In Private and Co- operative Enter- prises | In State Enter- prises | Total | In Private and Co- operative Enterprises | In State Enterprises | Total |
| 1924..... | 116 | 151 | 267 | 6,800 | 42,800 | 49,600 |
| 1925..... | 97 | 99 | 196 | 3,600 | 34,000 | 37,600 |
| 1926..... | 135 | 202 | 337 | 10,344 | 32,906 | 43,250 |
| 1927 (First six months) | 48 | 74 | 122 | 2,792 | 6,543 | 9,335 |

Most of the strikes are relatively small ones and are of short duration. The leaders of the miners' union tell me that strikes are usually due to the fact that the wages of a group of workers in some shaft or section are out of line with those of other groups of workers. The chief causes of strikes now are wages. For example, in 1925 nearly 70 percent of the strikes in government enterprises were caused by dissatisfaction with the norms of work and wages.

It often happens that a strike in a state industry will bring to light some tendencies toward bureaucracy in the union, or in the economic administration, that can be corrected. Factory and trust managers, as well as local trade union leaders, have been removed as a result of conditions brought to light by spontaneous strikes. Certain strikes in the textile industry in Ivanovo-Vosnesensk in 1925 were due to failures on the part of the local shop committees and union officials to work closely enough with the mass of workers, to understand their demands and to help them achieve them.

What happens to trade unions, as well as to Soviet and Party officials who permit unsatisfactory conditions to exist that lead to strikes, is illustrated in a story told by Anna Louise Strong in 1926.

It appears that a government railway line was being laid across the hot desert near the borders of Afghanistan in Usbekistan. Workers of several minor nationalities, chiefly Asiatic tribes, were employed on the job. This work was hard and hot, and the food was bad. The bosses, apparently, were quite as bad as the food. The workers were paid irregularly and did not seem to know whether or not they had a collective agreement. They could get no satisfaction out of the local authorities and the trade union officials were far away and unaware of

the conditions. At any rate, after much suffering, seven hundred men struck. A committee on arbitration, composed of responsible soviet officials who apparently knew what they were doing, was sent down from Tashkent. They granted the workers their various demands and the strike ended quite satisfactorily. But this was only the beginning of the story as Anna Strong tells it:

"Who was punished for this strike? The Soviet placing of responsibility, and the relations between various organizations—government, union, Party—is strikingly shown by the resolution adopted by the Central Asiatic Bureau of the Communist Party. It reads:

"The bureau entrusts to the Department of Labor (government) and to the Asiatic section of the Central Trade Unions the legal prosecution of the technical and administrative personnel who engaged and sent out workers under such conditions.

"We remind the Communist Party of Usbekistan that they have failed to carry out the orders of the Party regarding work among casual construction workers. . . . We call attention also to the absence of any kind of work among these workers on the part of the construction workers' union.' " ⁴

As a result of this "bureaucratic attitude" of the officers of the local construction workers' union, a special election was held and a union congress of the local district was called to elect new officials.

Miss Strong's report finishes with the following explanation:

⁴ "How the Soviet Union Deals with Strikes," *The Daily Worker*, Oct. 19, 1926. See also, in this connection, Miss Strong's excellent little booklet, *Workers' Life in Soviet Russia*, No. 1235 of the Haldeman-Julius Publications, Girard, Kansas.

"How simple it would be for an anti-soviet propagandist, using nine tenths of the above facts, to point out that when an unauthorized strike occurred in Russia because of rotten conditions, the trade union officials were punished for allowing the strike. Quite true. Strikes in Soviet government undertakings are considered a terrible disgrace to somebody. Not only to the bosses who have disregarded the needs of the workers, but to the appropriate trade union officers, who were asleep at their posts and allowed workers' conditions to reach such a disgraceful state that there was left as recourse only the wasteful method of the strike. If union officials can't satisfy the workers—even the casual unorganized workers—enough to prevent unauthorized strikes, then let them make way for somebody who can."

This is the logic of "strike prevention" in Soviet Russia today. Strikes are looked upon as evidences of unsatisfactory coordination between the workers' government and the workers' unions. }

In proportion to the number of workers employed in them, there are far more strikes in private than in state enterprises. Scores of examples could be cited. Here is a typical one from the strike history of 1927. In the course of remaking a collective agreement in a leather factory in the Urals, the union proposed several new points—a 10 percent increase in wages, a three months' wage for all workers in case of liquidation of the enterprise, a 200 rouble monthly contribution for additional beds in a workers' Rest Home. The proprietor would grant only a part of these demands. The union insisted on all of them. Finally, the private capi- >

talist declared he was going to close down his factory. In reply the union called a strike. It asked other unions for moral and material support and requested the railroad and water transport workers' union not to load or carry any of the products of the plant. The day following, the clerks in the stores of the same proprietor joined the strike. On the fifth day he settled granting the workers all their demands.

There have also been strikes in concession undertakings. A two-day strike against the Harriman Manganese Company near Tiflis compelled the concessionaire to live up to his promise in the agreement to build model homes for the workers. The following report issued by the C. C. T. U. will illustrate clearly the character of longer strikes which the unions have waged against certain concession companies:

"The Indo-European Telegraph Company, ('Indo') is a British corporation. It owns a telegraph line which links London with India. The line traverses a number of European countries, including the U. S. S. R. in which 'Indo' has several telegraph offices. Since 1873 'Indo' had a concession from the Imperial Russian Government. During the Revolution the line did not operate. In 1922 the company obtained a concession from the Soviet Government and has resumed the operation of the line.

"Until November 1, 1925, the employees of the Indo-European Telegraph Company in the U. S. S. R. worked under a collective agreement made between the Central Committee of the Postal-Telegraph Workers' Union and the concessionaire. The

Central Committee of the Union then started negotiations for a new agreement. After protracted negotiations lasting *nine months* the Company was still unwilling to grant two of the Union's demands—a 20 percent wage increase, from the date of expiration of the old agreement, to cover the rising cost of living (except in those places where a 33 percent increase had been obtained), and compensation to employees sent out on the line, in accordance with the provisions of the Labor Code.

"In order to settle the dispute as speedily as possible, the Central Committee of the Union proposed to the company to submit the case to the Commissariat of Labor, and declared all 'Indo' enterprises in a 'state of dispute.' But this measure did not convince the concessionaire.

"On August 20, 1926, the Union invited Mr. Cunningham, the company's chief representative in Moscow, to give a final reply, warning him that, failing to receive a reply, a strike would be called on the whole line. No reply had been received by the appointed time. At midday on August 20th a strike was declared by the head strike committee, and all the telegraph offices of 'Indo' from the Polish to the Persian border ceased work. Not only the telegraphers, but the shopmen, garage workers, repair men, etc., joined the strike.

"The 'Indo' officials did not believe in the possibility of a strike. And when it occurred, Mr. Cunningham attempted to bring government pressure to bear upon the Union. On August 24th he appealed, through the Commissariat of Post and Telegraph, to the Council of People's Commissars

of the U. S. S. R. complaining of the 'unjustifiable demands of the strikers.' The concessionaire must have thought he was in Great Britain."

On the fifteenth day of the strike Mr. Cunningham came to the Central Committee of the Union and asked on what terms they thought it possible to call off the strike.

"The Central Committee proposed to the company to grant the demands of the employees submitted before the strike, to pay in full for the period of the strike, to sign a collective agreement for two years, during which period the wages of the 'Indo' employees should automatically increase to the same extent as those of Post and Telegraph employees (employed by the state), plus two percent.

"On September 20th, the concessionaires submitted their counter-proposals, which are as follows: The company agrees to a 15 percent wage increase and to the Union's demand for proper compensation to the men sent out on the line, if the working hours are lengthened; an agreement should be made for three years, during which period the rates of wages must be revised yearly according to the cost of living index. They do not mention anything about paying for the period of the strike.

"On the same day the Central Committee of the Union informed the concessionaire that it accepts the 15 percent wage increase, but without lengthening the working hours; it also consents to an agreement being made for three years, provided

the wages of the 'Indo' employees are raised to the same extent as those of Postal-Telegraph employees, plus two percent; the time of the strike is to be paid for."

This report of the C. C. T. U. was made while the strike was still on. It was finally ended, "without a single case of blacklegging," after forty-nine days of striking. The employees succeeded in getting their chief demands fully satisfied. It was a smashing victory for the union.

This lengthy illustration is given to show that strikes for very substantial conditions are a fact in the Soviet Union. Foreign concessionaires who go there in the belief that the government can "fix it up" any time their men walk out will find that they have been misinformed. And it is unnecessary to add that the government of the Soviet Union does not participate in strike-breaking activities as do governments in other countries. It uses neither police nor injunctions against strikers, nor does it provide protection for strike-breakers. Anti-strike legislation, eviction of strikers from company houses, the use of deputy sheriffs or "coal-and-iron" police in the pay of corporations, employers' associations, anti-union campaigns, state constabularies, frame-up trials of militant workers, labor spies and *provocateurs*, "engineering corporations" devoted to demoralizing unions and smashing strikes—such methods of meeting workers' demands are unknown in the land where, to quote from the speeches of distinguished American trade union leaders, "the workers are in bondage."

The strike funds of the unions, as we have noted, are usually concentrated in the hands of the central com-

mittee of the national union. As in other countries, a strike must be sanctioned by it before funds are released. The strike benefits amount to from 50 to 75 percent of the regular wages. On July, 1926, the central committees and the provincial and district unions had altogether in their strike fund chests about \$755,000. Large strike funds are not needed in Soviet Russia, for there are no long drawn-out struggles over union "recognition" or hours of labor. The unions are generally recognized and the basic working hours—the lowest in the world—are fixed by law. And there are no powerful private corporations, as in other countries, to fight life-and-death battles with the unions, involving the expenditure of millions of dollars for bail, fines, lawyers' fees, picketing committees, hall rent, and a thousand and one items that may be listed as legitimate in connection with the conduct of a strike in the United States. Disputes over wages and conflicts growing out of bureaucratic tendencies in the government or the unions are usually settled without recourse to strikes. Hence strike funds are relatively small compared with those of other labor movements.

CHAPTER IX

UNION WORK IN PRIVATE ENTERPRISES

ALTHOUGH the number of workers in private, mixed, and concession enterprises is very small, the trade union problems here deserve some special attention, for they reveal the unions in much the same role they play in other countries and offer a basis of comparison as to practical methods used in dealing with the employer. The main concern of the union in these places is to defend the economic interests of the workers and "to train them for spirited struggles with capital."

Workers in these private enterprises are about 90 percent organized, but the number of workers involved is only about 300,000, or scarcely three percent of the total trade union membership of the country. However, in some cities and in some unions, the percentage of workers in private factories runs as high as 30 or 40 percent. This is the case, for example, in the clothing industry of Odessa. Here the problem of lining up the non-union worker and dealing with the small private boss is of great concern.

The policy of the unions in their dealings with private firms is to keep the wage level as high or higher than in government trusts, to take no part in management, to organize no production conferences, to compel the strictest observance of all labor laws and the terms of collective agreements, and in general to regard the management as the capitalist enemy with whom the class strug-

gle must be waged by all the methods customary to militant unions in other countries.

The general policy is easy to define but the practical enforcement of it is a major problem of those local unions which have a considerable percentage of their members in private firms. A letter of instruction on "Trade Union Work in Private Factories," issued by the Moscow Provincial Council of Trade Unions, illustrates some of the difficulties involved in this work. It is written in that peculiarly self-critical style which is characteristic of the Soviet unionist when he is trying to get at the heart of a problem. A person not familiar with the Russian temperament or with the style of the trade union pamphlet in Russia would, on reading these instructions, probably feel that no headway had been made in organizing private factories. It must be remembered, however, that 90 percent of the workers in these shops are in the union and, furthermore, that those who are not are chiefly those barred from membership by union rules. The problem this pamphlet grapples with is to make these workers *active* members, to alienate them from the influence of the private employer and to tie them up with the broad union movement, with the great family of organized workers, with its atmosphere and its achievements.

This letter of instruction suggests the following methods to improve the organization of the 40,000 workers in the small private enterprises of Moscow:— to hold all-city conferences of the enterprise or group committees (comprised of workers from a number of small shops in the same block or district of the town); to improve work among women and young workers; to organize more mutual aid societies; to enforce more rigorously the laws protecting labor; to improve the

cultural work among these workers and thus bring them up to the level of those who work in state factories.

In criticizing the work done by separate unions in this field, the Central Trades Council's instructions throw many sidelights on the difficulties of this organization job, which are, apparently, the same as those encountered in similar shops in America and other countries. They complain that at the delegates' meetings not enough attention is given to concrete trade union questions. They point out that the women are specially backward in reporting failures of the boss to protect the health of the workers. Some of them work more than the legal eight hours, and are afraid to tell their stories to the union or to labor inspectors. It is also stated that in many private shops apprenticeship training is inadequate and that the fixed number is not kept as required by the collective agreements.

There is also a tendency in small private shops, just as in the United States, for the owner to hire his relatives who are willing to work all hours of the day or night and to wink at violations of the labor law. The payment of dues also falls behind in private shops and dues collectors are not well organized. Unless mutual aid organizations are encouraged, the boss will tie the workers to him by giving them small loans. He may also try to bribe them in various underhand ways with gifts, special holidays, advances, and bonuses. In one instance the workers even refused to support the shop committee in a certain move, because they said it might hurt the boss whom they looked upon as a sort of benefactor.

Again, the boss is likely to know more about the labor laws than his backward, illiterate workers. He often attempts to confuse and mislead them with respect

to their rights under the Labor Code. In one case the proprietor of a restaurant went so far as to tell his workers they would have to eat while at work or they would have to pay a fine! Employers also engage workers on confidential agreements, and whenever possible try to get out of hiring them through the labor exchanges. If a fine is likely to be paid for this he will agree with the non-union worker to take it out of his wages. Some of these workers also hire out to a boss agreeing not to register for their social insurance or to go without other benefits guaranteed them in the Labor Code.

These are some of the problems the trade unions have to face in private shops, particularly in the smaller ones. But even in the larger ones, and with employers who are not unfriendly to the government, workers complain that they lack the "freedom" that is theirs in state factories. When I asked several workers in a good-sized establishment to explain what they meant by this they declared that in government enterprises they were more their own bosses. They could participate in production conferences. They could sense something in common with the management that is missing in the private factory. In the latter they think that they are being exploited and that the boss is squeezing out of them all that he can. The worker feels he is only a "hand." He has no Red Director with whom to talk over the problems of the factory. He is, in general, more on the defensive. Even workers who were getting higher wages than they would be likely to receive in state factories expressed this attitude. Unlike workers employed by the state trusts, they felt they had nothing in common with management.

Notwithstanding this psychological something that stands in the way of "freedom,"—at least for some of

the more politically conscious workers in the private factory—reports to the trade union indicate that workers in such concession undertakings as the Lena Goldfields, Ltd., are not slow to obtain all that is due them, at least in the way of cultural benefits. The mine workers' union may have taken special pains to improve the work in these mines. At any rate, it seems to compare favorably with that carried on in state-operated mines. We read in *Pravda* of August 31, 1927, that in the mines of this concession in Siberia there are two workers' clubs with 600 members, 400 of whom are studying in classes or circles. Last winter 70 theatrical entertainments were presented, 189 movies, 26 evening parties, 47 lectures and reports, and 18 mass meetings. There are also two main libraries and 27 circulating libraries in connection with the mines, and 25 "red corners," two of them specially for the Chinese and Yakut workers. In these corners 453 "loud readings" and 52 lectures were carried on last winter while the "question and answer" bureau served 2,500 workers.

Part of the support for these educational activities comes from the union but a part is also paid by the company which signs the usual collective agreement every summer with the union. Under this agreement the company agrees to pay three percent of the total wage bill for educational work, rest homes and nurseries. Part of this appropriation is used for workers' clubs.

These facts tend to show that in the larger private enterprises the unions are able to enlist the full support of the workers and carry on practically all the activities that are customary in state concerns. In concession undertakings particularly, the government and the unions seem to be equally bent on showing the foreign capitalist that the workers, even though they be imported coolie

labor, as in the distant Sakhalin coal mines, are not to be exploited in the same way that labor is exploited in other countries. As one of the Trade Union Bulletins issued by the C. C. T. U. puts it, "The unions should conduct an energetic campaign against all attempts by managements in private and concession undertakings to diminish the authority of the unions, particularly by appealing directly to higher union organizations over the heads of the works councils."

However, the attitude of the unions toward concessions is in the main that of the government. They do not stifle the concessionaire with impossible demands, although a history of the Metal Workers' Union issued in 1927 does state that "in concession enterprises the policy of the union is that wages should be from 15 to 20 percent higher than those obtaining in similar State enterprises." The trade union bulletin just quoted says: "The unions should not confront the concessionaire with claims which might lead to the closing down of the enterprise, and should in no case oppose the introduction of improved technical methods." The unions, as well as the soviet government, are interested in attracting foreign capital for the development of those industries and mines which cannot now be developed with the resources at the command of the soviet treasury. The unions do nothing to discourage concessions so long as agreements are made and kept and the provisions of the Labor Code observed by the concessionaire.

CHAPTER X

RELATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT

Go into any union headquarters in the U. S. S. R. and ask for their printed reports on the last year's activities. Read through this material and you are bound to find something that will help to better your understanding of the relation between the unions and the Soviet government. In the capital of the Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic of Moldavia I did this. I found in the report handed me by the secretary of the local trades council a great deal about union cooperation with the government in building up the life of that small republic situated on the borders of Rumania. I found the unions reporting on the work of their representatives on all the planning and regulating organs of the government, of their participation in the drawing up of the budget for the republic. They told, for example, of how they had shown the financial department of the government some defects in its index numbers dealing with production; of how they had helped to lower prices, and to make certain government departments more economical. In fact they stated that as a result of their participation in this job they had saved the government just 215,000 roubles.

All this aid to the state becomes clearer when one remembers the role that the unions have played in fighting on the barricades and in the trenches for this government, and in building it up, stone upon stone,

through these first ten years. Inquire of any responsible union official about this close relationship and he will explain it in somewhat the following words:¹

"You ask, what is the relation of the workers' unions to the government in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat when power rests in the hands of the working class itself? The union and the government are two separate entities. They are the same working class organized in two different ways. Our struggles during the last ten years have required the closest relationship between the two. The organized workers of Russia understand this. They have learned that governments are the organizations of class force. When a government is in the hands of the bourgeois elements, the workers and their unions should try to overthrow it and gain state power for themselves. But when our own class is in power the relationship is entirely different. Visitors from Europe and America toy with the phrase 'independence of trade unions.' They dwell on the separation of the economic and political struggles. They seem to think that our unions must necessarily, just because they are unions, have an entirely different policy from that of the political organs of the proletarian dictatorship. This grows out of a misconception of our state. They appear to believe that we have in Russia a petty bourgeois republic and that it will be only a few years till we have capitalists in complete control and Kerensky's cabinets and parliaments restored. But we have a different opinion on that matter.

¹ We translate loosely from a statement given out recently by a high official in the Russian unions to an inquiring American visitor. Substantially the same points are made in a pamphlet by M. Tomskey, *The Trade Unions, the Party and the State*, published by the Commission for Foreign Relations of the C.C.T.U. of the U.S.S.R., in 1927.

"Although we do not have class controversies in the Western sense between our working class and our government, we do have conflicts within the working class itself. We have bureaucratic tendencies and we make no effort to hide them. We have directors of state trusts who have conflicts with workers' organizations. We try to solve these conflicts and fight these tendencies. But we do it within the class itself and not through a struggle 'against the government.'

"You ask, 'Are the trade unions dependent on the government?' If you give these words the formal meaning they convey in other countries, then certainly the unions can be called independent. They have their own inner democracy, their own officers and finances. They are in no way in submission to the organs of the government. They are free social associations and are not even required by law to register as in other countries. But in the wider meaning of the term the workers' organizations are mutually interdependent with the government because they are the organs of the same class that controls the government. 'Our class runs the government,' say the unions. And the same class is naturally in charge of the unions. Consider also the number of our union men represented on all governmental boards and departments. The highest organs of the government can decide no question vitally concerning the life of the workers without first having our approval. We have never once been refused when we called up the highest authorities on the telephone and told them 'Hold up on this matter. You must first have our final opinion on it.' We have the right to request from any People's Commissar a report on the work of his department. And he cannot get out of it

by saying that he has the legal right to refuse. He knows that we were fighting together with the soviets and that we hold the power together in this country.

"As for financial dependence on the government, there is none. We receive no subsidy except that which is provided for in the Labor Code and which is in complete harmony with the essence of our proletarian government. And we doubt if Western unions with all their 'independence' would turn down offers of free buildings and similar favors from their governments were they inclined to grant them. Indeed, we have heard that in some countries labor leaders have accepted cabinet portfolios and appointments to political positions. There seems to be a very intimate relationship between these labor leaders and the capitalist politicians.

"For ourselves, we can say that we do not formally depend on governmental power and no orders of the government are binding on us except the general laws of our country. But we are as loyal to 'our institutions'—our working class institutions—as your American labor leaders, for example, are loyal to 'American institutions,' meaning the class apparatus of the bankers and businessmen's state."

Let us see how this general relationship, sketched by our Russian trade union leader, works out in practice. Look over the constitution of any Russian union under the section headed 'aims and objects' and you will find the significance of his remarks. Take as typical the rules of the water transport workers' union. Here are some of the expressed objects of this union: "to take part in the organization and regulation of labor and production." In achieving its various objects it "cooperates with the state departments in charge of social insurance for the workers; pleads for the interests of the union

before the various governmental and public institutions, through its representatives; takes part in the organization of management bodies, putting up its candidates for administrative positions; participates in the construction and organization of soviet bodies by sending representatives to the latter from among the union's membership."

UNION APPOINTMENTS

The inter-union trades councils and the C. C. T. U. also have a voice in a great many branches of government. We may enumerate at random a few of the ways in which the unions play their part.

The selection of the People's Commissar of Labor is the privilege of the All-Union Congress of Trade Unions which meets every two years. The decision of this congress is obligatory on the government. Commissar Schmidt, who happens to be a member of the presidium of the C. C. T. U., is the present incumbent. He reports regularly to the union congress. His report is fully discussed. After this discussion, if his report is satisfactorily received, he is chosen again for the post of Commissar of Labor,—exactly as though the Secretary of Labor of the United States were appointed by the convention of the American Federation of Labor, after making a businesslike report to them of his activities during the fiscal year.

In the same manner, the trades councils of the various provinces and districts at their congresses select the head of the Commissariat of Labor for their area. The chief of the Commissariat in Moscow province, for example, is always on the program to deliver a report to the congress of the Moscow Provincial Council of Trade Unions.

All lower officials of the Labor Commissariat in all its branches are likewise appointees of the appropriate trade union councils. Labor inspectors are nominated by local union councils. They must be union men. Sanitary and technical inspectors employed by this department are nominated by the unions and work in close cooperation with them, reporting to their congresses, cooperating with them in establishing new rules for sanitary and mechanical safety.

In departments administering the social insurance of the country the unions are also well represented. The heads of the social insurance departments, nationally and locally, report to union congresses. On the Social Insurance Council of the U. S. S. R. the unions have four members and four alternates; on the same council in the R. S. F. S. F. they have five members and four alternates. In Leningrad province the local unions have six out of thirteen directors of the local social insurance department.

All labor legislation of the country, including all laws that affect labor in any way, is drafted in cooperation with the labor unions. There is a custom—President Tomskey calls it an “unwritten law”—that no important legislation may be passed without the approval of the C. C. T. U. If the Labor Code is to be revised, the unions do it. On special commissions of any kind to draft legislation they always form a majority. In case a law unfavorable to organized labor should happen to pass the Council of People’s Commissars, the unions would try to revise it in the Central Executive Committee of the U. S. S. R. or in its presidium, on both of which, as we shall see, they are well represented.

The relation of the unions to various economic and industrial departments of the government must also be

mentioned. On the Council of Labor and Defense, the highest organ in this field, we find that two out of nine must be representatives of the C. C. T. U. In the Supreme Council of National Economy of the U. S. S. R. we find twelve union officials representing either the C. C. T. U. or the central committees of national unions. On the same council in the R. S. F. S. R. are nine appointed by the unions and proportionate numbers in all the provinces and territories. The unions were, in fact, the original organizers of these Economic Councils and have always played an important role in their work.

To the State Planning Commission are summoned representatives of the various unions when matters affecting their interests are to be discussed in the industrial section, the building section, and nine other sections. A representative of the presidium of the C. C. T. U. always sits in at presidium meetings of the Gosplan, and persons representing the unions are working in its various departments.

Special representatives of the C. C. T. U. or of the central committee of the national unions are also on the following economic and public bodies:—Committee for Transport (under the Council of Labor and Defense) and other committees working under the Council of Labor and Defense such as the Committee on Standardization; the Economic Conference of the R. S. F. S. R.; the Industrial Plan Bureau of the U. S. S. R.; the Chief Economic Department of the Supreme Economic Council; the Budget Conference of the U. S. S. R. as well as the R. S. F. S. R.; the Balance Commission; the War Industries Committee; the Insurance Council of the U. S. S. R.—five representatives; the Committee for Fixing Personal Pensions; the Insurance Conflict Committee; the Committee on Fixing Compensation for

Dangerous Work; the Committee for Fixing the Personal Pensions of Scientists; the Budget Committee of the Commissariat of Agriculture; the subcommittee under the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection Committee; the Committee for the Struggle with Accidents—five persons; the Auditing Committee of the Cooperatives; the Central Workers' Section of the Cooperatives; the All-Union Cooperative Bank and committees under it such as the Assessment Committee, the Auditing Committee, and the section on workers' credit; the Central Municipal Bank—represented in its administration and council; the Council of Housing Cooperatives; the Intersection Committee on Local Transport; the Directing Committee under the Chief Concessions Committee; the committees under the Revolutionary War Council; the Committee for Lowering Retail Prices, under the Commissariat of Trade; the Council on Technical Normalization; the Committee on Labor in Private Industrial and Invalid Cooperatives. These are only examples. The provincial trades councils are likewise represented in scores of similar departments and commissions covering a single province or territory.

In addition to this manifold representation on public economic bodies of various kinds we find the central committees of national unions represented in various commissariats—the Medical Workers in the Commissariat of Health, the Art Workers in the Commissariat of Education. The Educational Workers, as well as the educational department of the C. C. T. U. have a member on the *collegium* of the Commissariat of Education. They speak there as trade unionists representing the interests of their constituents, fighting for wage increases, protecting the workers' interests against

the bureaucrats who may have crept into administrative positions.

Finally, we may mention the hold that organized labor has on the Central Executive Committee, the supreme legislating and administrative body of the country. On the Central Executive Committee of the U. S. S. R. it has 28 members and 11 alternates from the C. C. T. U. and national union administrations. And on the C. E. C. of the R. S. F. S. R. it has 22 members and 11 alternates. From the lower trades councils and provincial unions come also scores of trade union officials to sit on the Central Executive Committee of both the U. S. S. R. and all its constituent republics. Of course all worker members of these committees are unionists. We are speaking here only of union leaders who happen to sit on these committees and who influence their policies. On the presidium of twenty-one elected by the Central Executive Committees of the U. S. S. R. we find seven trade union representatives.

Wherever the interests of the workers as workers and as trade unionists have to be defended, there you will find someone speaking for them, sometimes with a deciding voice in these committees, commissions and departments, sometimes with only a consulting voice.

Anyone who has attended a congress of the C. C. T. U. soon recognizes the close relationship between the unions and the governmental organs. For example, at the last congress in 1926, speeches of greeting were made by A. I. Rykov, the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, K. E. Voroshilov, Commissar for Army and Navy, G. I. Petrovsky, Chairman of the Ukrainian Republic, V. V. Schmidt, Commissar for Labor, and Nemchenko of the Social Insurance Section, as well as V. V. Kubyshev, Chairman of the Supreme

Council of National Economy. Greetings to the Congress were read from army brigades, the Central Executive Committee of the U. S. S. R., the Red Army and the Red Fleet, the Society for Aviation and similar organizations. General Budenny's famous cavalry division is officially under the supervision or "patronage" of the C. C. T. U. The same fraternal bonds between union and soviet power may be observed from the lowest to the highest units of the union movement.

One also observes living evidence of this relationship in the various joint demonstrations, campaigns and celebrations, whether it be the drive to lower prices, an "Our Answer to Chamberlain" campaign, or the brilliant anniversary celebrations of the Tenth Year. Among independent social organizations the unions always occupy first place on the program along with the Communist Party and the Government.

We may refer again to the provisions of the Labor Code which define the extent to which the state shall assist the unions. It provides, as does the constitution of the country, that "all state authorities shall be bound to give trade unions and federations thereof all requisite assistance by furnishing them with properly equipped buildings for the establishment of labor palaces and union offices, and extending them privileges in connection with the use of the postal, telegraph, telephone, railway and water transport services." They also receive certain reductions in taxes and contributions, such as all taxes and duties in connection with court and notarial transactions. In general, they have the same privileges in this respect as institutions on the government budget. Their sanitariums and rest homes are also freed from taxes and they have no taxes on their publications.

This does not mean that all the labor union headquarters in Russia are provided and maintained by the government. In some places, as in the mining regions of the Donbas, the unions have put up their own union homes, as no buildings suitable for their purposes were available. But when the miners' union wanted to get from abroad important electrical equipment for their new buildings, by phoning the proper government department they were able to have it imported without duty.

SOVIET ELECTIONS

The relationship to the government is also manifest in the part the unions take in elections to the soviets. They do all they can to "get out the vote" at the regular elections which are held in the factories and work places. During the national elections in January, 1927, the *Leningrad Metal Worker*, organ of the powerful metal workers' union of that province, urged all its members to turn out in full force for the soviet elections, and to put in strong workers to face the problems of the coming year—industrialization of the country, the struggle with bureaucracy and red tape, the campaign to lower prices, to increase the quality of production and to push the electrification schemes to conclusion, as well as to "upbuild the socialist economy." All unions and the influential union press made similar appeals. As a result, over 63 percent of the union members in the country took part in the election, an improvement over previous elections. In Leningrad the percentage of unionists voting was 91 and in Moscow 90, while in the Ural industries from 87 to 99 percent voted. In some of the city factories 100 percent of the workers voted.

The shop committees take part in the work of organizing election committees in the various factories and institutions where elections are held.³ The mass of workers are thus brought very close to the election apparatus of the state. They attend meetings where reports are made by their representatives in the soviets. There are always weeks of discussion preceding the elections. The workers are personally acquainted with the union "brothers" who make the laws of the city, the province, and the country. It is not uncommon in going through a Russian factory to be introduced to a worker at his machine. "Here is Comrade Ugarov, a member of the district soviet," or "This is Comrade Ivanov of the Moscow Soviet." In Moscow there is one delegate in the soviet for every 500 workers in the factory. Smaller factories and offices combine to elect a member. In one factory of some 2,000 workers in Leningrad we met four members of the city soviet. They attended soviet meetings twice a week, their wages continuing at the factory for the hours they were attending to city business.

We have also come upon members of even the Central Executive Committee of the U. S. S. R. working at their jobs in the factory. This identity of active union worker and soviet member is one of the most influential factors binding the unions to the government and its general social aims. It may be mentioned also that the unions take just as active a part in many village soviet elections, working through the members of the land and forest workers' union, or some other union that happens to be strong in the village. They lay

³ For a close-up description of various phases of a soviet election in a textile factory and a metal factory see Brailsford's *How the Soviets Work*, Chapter III.

great stress upon this work as it means bringing the workers and peasants closer together.

TENDENCIES

In spite of the various public and semi-official duties performed by the unions, one must not lose sight of the fact that their main job is to protect the economic interest of the masses. The leaders of the unions have at times criticized some of their fellows for becoming too much involved in political and public functions. Their preoccupation with this, it has been charged, has hindered their work along strictly trade union protective lines. This is a possible tendency and union leaders are apparently among the first to detect it and to take steps to guard against it.

Since the introduction of the NEP, some observers of the Russian unions have predicted that as the country returned to a more capitalistic basis, with private business tendencies growing stronger, the unions would be forced to adopt a more militant attitude toward the government. If it is true that the country is moving toward capitalism, certainly this will be the result. The unions will assume a more militant and fighting role, as they do now, in fact, in private and concession undertakings. But the "drift toward capitalism" has been somewhat exaggerated by foreign business men. The socialized forces are actually growing faster than the private forces in production. Some 83 percent of industrial production is now controlled by the state trusts. The unions will probably become increasingly important as semi-administrative organs, or at least as closer participants in the socialist construction of the country.

The average union leader in Russia will tell you that he sees the time coming—how far off he does not predict—when the unions will greatly modify their functions. As the state becomes less the instrument of class oppression and dictatorship and more a social instrument for constructing a new society, the unions may tend to become organs of production and distribution. But for the present, they must maintain a position half way between “independence” and complete identification with the government.

UNIONS AND COOPERATIVES

One of the most practical ways in which the soviet unions help the government in its present task of building toward socialism, is in the hearty support they give the cooperative movement. One always thinks of the union movement and the cooperatives as the two most powerful social-economic forces in the country. The help these giants render each other is significant.

The unions write their enthusiasm for cooperation into their very constitutions. The rules of the water transport workers, for example, declare that one of the aims and objects of the organization is to “assist in strengthening the material basis and the organizational standard of the cooperative enterprises.” And the metal workers in a chatty little handbook, *What You Should Know About Your Union*, issued for the enlightenment of its new recruits, declares:

“A member of our union is not only a producer of goods; he is also a consumer of all the various articles which he needs in his household.

“He is interested not only in the amount of money

he is bringing home but also in the purchasing power of this money."

Then it tells the new member how he can avoid fattening the profits of the *Nepmen*:

"The workers must organize strong cooperative stores. They must put a boycott on all private stores. They must buy all their commodities in their own cooperative stores.

"The shortcomings of our cooperative stores—and there are many—are due to the fact that many workers do not take a genuine interest in them."

The metal workers' pamphlet urges that support of cooperation must not take the form of merely scolding the cooperative managers and turning from them to private dealers: "The proper interest must be expressed in making cooperatives carry goods the workers most need, in seeing that the prices are low and that things are managed in the proper way."

"The good union branch will encourage all its members to become cooperative shareholders, and it will have trusted union men on the boards of the societies," the pamphlet concludes.

Similar exhortations and instructions run through all the literature of soviet unionism. We find also that factory educational committees arrange for special reports, talks and lectures on cooperation. They conduct "cooperative circles" and arrange "cooperative corners" in the clubs. They plan cooperative excursions in which unionists make trips of inspection to cooperative institutions. The unions join vigorously in the publicity and poster campaigns for cooperation that center around

International Cooperation Day celebrated every year on July 4th. The heads of the cooperative movement make lengthy reports to all congresses of the unions and special resolutions dealing with the subject are passed.

The avowed aim of the union is to have 100 percent of the workers' budget expended in the cooperative stores. It is estimated that about 60 percent of the workers' money now goes over the counter of these stores. Officials of the miners' union told me that 65 percent of the average mine worker's budget is now spent in the "coops" and that 80 percent of the miners belong to one. More than three-fourths of all the union members of the U. S. S. R. are members of cooperative societies.

The unions are, of course, active in fostering every kind of cooperative operation. They secure credits from the government banks for clothes and other merchandise purchased at wholesale prices from the cooperatives. The provincial trade councils, such as those in Moscow, run cooperative stores of their own. Housing cooperatives are stimulated through the fact that the union administers the funds set aside, out of the profits of the industries, for building apartments for workers. The unions are leaders in the organization of cooperative dining rooms, working usually through a mixed cooperative and state enterprise called the *Narpit* (Public Food Company). They also help cooperation greatly by putting their funds in cooperative banks; and they are represented on the boards of these banks as well as on the boards of directors of other cooperative enterprises.

The social and political importance of this support of cooperation is fully understood by the leaders of the

unions who will quote to you the words of Lenin in one of the last articles he wrote before his death:

"This cooperation is not in itself the structure of the socialist society, but it is everything that is required now for this structure."^{*}

^{*} *Labour Monthly*, Vol. 5, No. 3, September, 1923, p. 138. For a brief sketch of the present-day cooperative movement in U.S.S.R., see *Russia After Ten Years*, p. 54. The best extensive history on the Russian cooperatives is E. T. Blanc's *Cooperative Movement in Russia*.

CHAPTER XI

THE UNION'S PART IN PRODUCTION

SINCE the October Revolution the trade unions, as we have observed, have taken a leading part in building up industry in the Soviet republics. They have been the active allies of the state in stimulating production. We have noted how the unions, immediately after the Revolution, helped to enforce the nationalization policies, how they fought the sabotage of the technicians, how they devised methods of workers' control and management. After the promulgation of the NEP, while waiving any claims to direct management of the enterprises, they still continued to perform important functions related to the improvement of the quality and quantity of production. During the last five years these functions have been systematized and perfected.

The attitude of the unions on the question of production is merely one aspect of their general attitude toward the Soviet Power, discussed in the preceding chapter. One must also remember, in this connection, that the workers in state enterprises feel that they are working not to produce profits for a banking combine, a private corporation or a collection of absentee owners and coupon clippers. Instead they know that they are working in an enterprise owned and operated by their government and hence, in a real sense, they are part

owners of their plant. They are, furthermore, strengthened in this feeling when they see fellow-workers from their own ranks, from their own union, in charge of the factory and trust. They see also that the primary aim of the industry in which they work is to raise the standards of those employed in it as well as to produce goods that the peasants and workers can buy cheaply, thus elevating the general standard of living of the country. They see ten percent of the profits of the industry going directly to the "fund for the improvement of life." They see over thirteen percent of the total payroll directed to social insurance funds to cover payments for accidents, sickness, permanent disability, old age and unemployment, as well as to their families in case of death, and for additional birth and burial allowances. They see none of the profits of the plant going into the hands of private capitalists but instead into the building up of their own industry or into the economic budget of the state for investment in other necessary industries. They note also that the profits of the state trusts are used within their country and not exported abroad to lower wage fields for investment in private super-profit and imperialist enterprises. Finally, they see that wages are steadily increased and hours shortened (note the recent announcement of the seven-hour day) as industry develops, and that various incentives to production are offered in their own plant. . . . All of these factors lead the organized workers of Russia to be concerned about production and to take an interest in industry not manifested by workers in other lands.

The latest official union statement on the business of getting on with production is contained in a resolution passed at the last Trade Union Congress in 1926:

"The industrialization of the country, the need for capital, and the raising of the material and cultural standards of the workers require the further raising of the efficiency of work. It requires the constant attention of the trade unions. . . . This raising of production cannot be accomplished through a temporary campaign but needs unceasing and systematic work over a long period.

"Having exhausted the various methods for improving personal efficiency, the next step should be toward the rationalization of the productive processes, and the full utilization of labor power by means of more energetic reduction of administrative expenditures, reduction of absences and other measures which will produce the maximum production.

"The working class and its trade unions by working steadily and methodically for the development of industry and the whole soviet economy not only creates the conditions for the further raising of the material and cultural level of the workers but also insures the success of the building of socialism in our country."

What is the machinery through which this interest in production is stimulated? How is it harnessed to the upbuilding of industry? There is first the universal custom of having the manager of the factory, and in some cases even the directors of the trust, report to the general or delegates' meetings of the workers of the plant. This usually happens twice a year and is always the occasion for extensive discussion. Unless the manager is able to report progress, and to demonstrate it plainly by his charts and exhibits, he is bound to come in for spirited criticism from the work-

ers. I have been present at several such meetings where the manager of the plant was subjected to a fire of questions and sharp speeches from the floor.

The heads of the trusts also report about two times a year to the district conferences of the unions involved. This is also the signal for a wide open discussion on all matters dealt with in these reports. In one local textile district when a trust director reported to the delegates at such a conference, 190 workers asked to speak on his report. "And the speeches had to be sensible, too," my informant, a textile worker, who had been at the conference, added. "Otherwise the workers wouldn't listen. When it isn't a practical, helpful speech you will hear shouts of *Davolna! Davolna!* [enough! enough!] and the speaker either improves his talk or sits down." It is apparently constructive discussion that is required at these conferences.

The unions do not always wait for a trust director to appear at a conference to report on the industrial unit for which he is responsible. The executive committees of the unions often call these directors before them not only to complain about their business management, to make charges of inefficiency in some branch of their work, to scrutinize their reports on output, but also to devise with them methods for increasing the quality of the manufactured goods.

Not only do factory and trust directors report to union meetings and conferences, but the various branches of the Supreme Council of National Economy report, also, to the national unions involved. For example, the chief of the Metal Trades Department of the Supreme Council reported in May, 1927, to a meeting of the executive committee of the metal workers' union. This is a regular procedure. One of the lead-

ers of this union described to the writer its relation to these higher economic bodies: "We created the Supreme Council. Our chaps fill its important posts. We say to them 'You are the managers. You run the industry. We will keep the workers well organized for their protection. You come and report to us. We will criticize you. We control you, and you are really working for us.' We expect the economic leaders to tend well to their business of running the industries. They fill their place in the economic scheme. But they must work with us and for us in building up the metal industry." This is "union-management cooperation" in Soviet Russia.

PRODUCTION COMMITTEES AND CONFERENCES

Since the first production conferences were organized in Leningrad and Tula in 1924 they have had a very rapid growth both in number and in functions. Everywhere I went in Russia I found workers boasting of their achievements.

These production conferences and committees are organized to develop the economic initiative of the masses, to help develop more qualified applicants for technical and administrative positions, to stimulate suggestions from workers concerning the organization and management of the plant, prevention of waste and leakage, costs of production, and related problems.

The factory production committees are usually composed of delegates from all departments, a representative or two from the shop committee (one of whom usually acts as chairman), the technical advisers to management and the manager himself, making a committee of from three to fifteen members. These members,

usually chosen by the factory committee and cooperating closely with it, hold their meetings about twice a month and make reports to the plant production conferences not less than once in three months. They prepare the list of questions to come before production conferences and see to it that resolutions passed by these conferences are carried out. In large plants departmental production committees are selected by the factory committee, one of whose members usually acts as chairman.

The production conferences are composed of all workers who are voluntarily interested in helping solve local production problems. In large plants they may be called in separate departments as well as for the plant as a whole. These conferences have no right to force any measure on management. They are exclusively consultative organs. However, they have a regular procedure whereby their proposals are sent through the factory committee to the administration, the factory committee fixing the length of the period during which management can reply as to the acceptability of the proposal. If management agrees to the proposal, it fixes a time during which it is to be put into effect. If it rejects a proposal, or refuses to carry it out during the time set, the factory committee may submit the case to the higher economic bodies, such as the trust or the local branch of the Supreme Council of National Economy. The administration must keep a record of all proposals, indicating those accepted, those rejected, and those sent on to higher economic bodies, with reasons for rejection. There must also be a record of how accepted proposals were actually carried out.

General factory conferences are held about once a month, while departmental conferences gather usually

about once in two weeks. A larger percentage of the workers involved attend the departmental conferences, for the worker is naturally more interested in questions affecting his own department. In Leningrad the average attendance reported in 1925 was 20 percent of the workers at general factory conferences and 70 percent at departmental conferences. About 10 percent of all the organized workers in the country were attending general factory conferences in 1926.¹

The work of production committees sometimes tends to overlap that of other subcommittees in the factory. But experience is gradually eliminating any such duplication. For example, a bad ventilation system would be a matter for the attention of the protection of labor committee. But if it reflected itself in lower production it would also come within the province of the production committee.

Suggestions for improvements which have come through production committees and conferences seem to have been practical ones and a very high percentage of them have been adopted by factory managements. In several plants I found that 75 percent of the suggestions made by workers through production conferences had been accepted and applied. In the Leningrad industries alone, during the first fifteen months after the introduction of the conference system, the workers made over 10,000 suggestions. About 6,000 of these were carried out, their application resulting in improvements in production.²

¹ A. Ginsburg, *What is the Need for Production Conferences and How They Work*, 1926 (in Russian).

² A survey of the work of certain production conferences for the first half of the economic year 1926-1927 appeared in *Pravda* on September 14, 1927. A study of the conferences in 347 enterprises with 597,000 workers, and 42 railroad locals with 60,000 workers, showed that a total of 25,000 propositions had been made. About four-fifths of these had been made

In their annual or biennial reports, as we have noted, the unions always give a full account of their work in this field. For example, the union of soviet, public and commercial employees, the members of which are largely engaged in governmental institutions and offices, reports in 1926 that about 75 percent of its shop or "institutional" committees have what they call "economy committees" corresponding to production committees in factories. This union also reports that of the proposals made by its economy conferences 90 percent have been carried out during the period, and only 10 percent rejected.

INVENTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Production conferences and committees have greatly stimulated inventions by individual workers. Special rewards are given for any labor-saving devices. The amount is fixed by a mixed commission of workers and management. In some cases it is proportionate to the savings made through the improvement. In several factories I found it was 25 percent of the savings. In others a lump sum is given ranging from 10 to 1,000 roubles. For example, one worker we met in a tobacco factory in Moscow had invented a machine for filling boxes. Under the law he could manufacture the machine himself and exploit it personally. However, he had preferred to give it to his factory, receiving in return 250 roubles and a state patent on the device. In a textile plant the head of the fabkom showed us

by workers and only one-fifth by technical men. Of the suggestions made 78 percent had been accepted by the administration. In some industries the acceptances ran as high as 85 percent. Of the approximately 19,000 suggestions accepted in the industrial enterprises, covered by reports from seven industrial unions, 12,600, or about 66 percent, were actually realized and applied.

some of the records of the inventions recently made. One was by a worker who had devised a new way to clean one of the drying drums in the slashing department, resulting in an economy of about nineteen roubles for each cleaning, and a saving of six hours work. His premium was 100 roubles. Another worker in the printing department had just received a reward of 150 roubles for improving a machine for stretching cloth. Still another we met in a candy factory had invented a machine for cutting caramels and had received a premium of 300 roubles. Similar rewards are given in all governmental enterprises throughout the Soviet Union.

CONTROL COMMISSIONS

The latest trade union organ to participate in production work and to strengthen the work of the factory production conferences is the so-called control commission. This is ordinarily a temporary committee of from three to seven members chosen at the factory production conferences. Its members are on duty partly during working hours and are paid by the factory administration at a rate agreed upon by the fabkom and the administration.

What does this commission do? Its function is to acquaint itself with all programs, plans, budgets, documents and books having to do with the operation of the factory. There are no "trade secrets" into which it may not inquire. Then when the factory manager makes his report to the production conference or committee, the control commission has the detailed information with which to check up on his work and to determine whether his figures are correct. The workers

are usually a bit staggered when confronted with the wealth of diagrams and statistics presented in the reports of management. The control commission is to provide them and the fabkom, and the worker members of the production committee, with sufficient facts to be able to discuss all the plans of management intelligently at the meetings and conferences. Having finished its report to a particular meeting the control commission is dissolved and a new one appointed when the need arises.

A symposium on control commissions which appeared in the *Moscow Proletariat*, organ of the Central Council of Trade Unions of Moscow Province in the summer of 1927 indicated that the workers, the heads of fabkoms and the chairmen of production committees all valued the service of these bodies. One machinist pointed out that the work of the production committee in his plant was greatly improved through the existence of the control commission as it had provided a basis of fact on which the production committee could operate in thrashing out production problems with management. Although a few factory managers were at first skeptical of the commissions, it would seem that they now realize their value both to the workers and to the industry. A report in *Pravda*, August 26, 1927, states that the C. C. T. U. plans to set them up in two hundred more enterprises. Up to that date they had been tried out in only twenty-six. The report declares that the commissions have the right, which they frequently exercise, to hire outside specialists and experts to help them in their work of checking up on factory problems. It also shows that commissions have been fruitful in suggestions. In the famous Putilov Metal Works in Leningrad, for example, the commission gave one

hundred and eighteen suggestions during the year, one of which netted an economy of \$30,000. Examples are given from the industries of Leningrad, Baku, Stalingrad and other places where commissions have helped to strengthen the work of production conferences.

OTHER WAYS TO STIMULATE PRODUCTION

In their zeal for improving production in the state and cooperative industries the unions have devoted a great deal of attention to improving the technical qualifications of their members. Not only do they issue a considerable number of excellent technical journals but they have given much time and money to technical education.

A typical journal called "*Production Conference*," issued by the Leningrad Trades Council, will illustrate what is being done to popularize production work among unionists. It is a twenty-four-page illustrated fortnightly. A sample issue which I picked up while in Leningrad contained, first, a leading article on the participation of the unions in the fixing of "control figures" by the State Planning Commission. After that came an illustrated story on new glass construction in factories being built by one of the textile trusts. Several pages on the work of local production conferences in Leningrad factories followed this, as well as pictures of new Russian plants and electrical stations, models of new types of machines, a story on a government oil trust, several pages of "news from the factories" signed by worker correspondents, a section called "at the machine" containing further reports from workers on the job, book reviews, jokes and cartoons poking fun at some of the hitches and "bureaucratic tendencies" en-

countered in the work of improving production; a "questions and answers" page, pictures and articles on technical developments abroad. These were the contents of a clearly printed, well illustrated journal read chiefly by workers who take part in plant production committees and conferences in the Leningrad district.

The unions also issue a great many popular booklets and simple textbooks on various phases of production. Some are for study classes and some for the special use of production committees. The following are some of the titles: "How the Production Conferences Should Work," "Participation of Workers in the Organization of Production," "What is the Need for Production Conferences?", "How to Increase Your Qualifications" and "What the Factory Student Should Know About His Rights."

In addition to these general and more popular publications, we find another great stimulus to production in the journals issued by the engineers' and technicians' sections of the unions. The purpose of these organs is partly to enlist the creative enthusiasm of the highest qualified workers in the production conferences and partly to strengthen the loyalty of these specialists to the broad aims of soviet industrial development.

TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN THE FACTORY

Every factory must, under the terms of its collective agreement with the union, train a certain number of apprentices ranging from two to thirteen percent of the number of workers employed in the factory. This training is usually carried on partly in the factory and partly in what is known as the factory school. The young worker who by special permission of the De-

partment of Labor enters industry between the ages of fourteen and sixteen (there are relatively few in this category) must spend at least four hours a day in the factory school and not more than four in the factory, being paid, however, for eight hours work. At the age of sixteen he may work six hours in the factory and two in the school. Not until he is eighteen years old may he work eight hours in the shop. The training in the factory schools runs from two to four years. General and social educational subjects are emphasized in the earlier years, vocational training increasing toward the end of the course. Tens of thousands of workers are taking these courses.

These schools are under the joint supervision of the fabkom, the factory administration, and the state educational authorities. They are supported by the factory or the trust with which it is associated. The teachers in the school are usually the technical experts and research staff of the factory. Graduates from these schools enter the more important skilled trades and receive at the start a wage well above the average for the factory. In view of the dearth of well qualified workers, it is a fact, as we have noted, that the wages of skilled workers are unusually high compared with those of the unskilled.

In addition to the regular factory schools for apprentices, we find a wide variety of courses of technical instruction in the shop—one year courses for the average adult worker, two year courses for the better qualified, courses for foreman, courses for those who have been promoted to higher positions, correspondence courses of various kinds, courses for those preparing for administrative work, and graduate courses for those who have already passed through the full-time workers' high

school and have returned to the factory. There are many kinds of evening schools with technical courses sometimes lasting two years.

We also find "production circles" and circles for the "liquidation of technical illiteracy" flourishing in the factory with courses running from three to six months as a part of the regular cultural-education work of the club, the "red corner" or the "self-education corner." Then there are "production excursions"—visits to other factories—"production evenings" and "our factory evenings" where questions affecting production are discussed in the club. "Production films" are shown in plant theatres, and similar methods of more popular education are employed.

The union is thus regarded as the first educator of the workers in matters affecting production. It directs the young worker into technical schools. It organizes the student as he enters these schools. It makes recommendations for the promotion of workers to higher positions in the factory. It helps the worker to increase his qualifications so that he may become more valuable to his country and to the development of her socialized industries.

CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF LABOR

Perhaps the most interesting and valuable of all the technical institutions involved in the business of educating the workers of Russia in the ways of production is the Central Institute of Labor, with its main building in Moscow. It is a technical training school organized under the C. C. T. U. in 1920. It was at first supported entirely from union funds but latterly it has been maintained partly by funds from the Social

Insurance Department of the Commissariat of Labor, partly from the C. C. T. U., and partly from the trusts and institutions for which it prepares skilled workers.

The institute is the nearest thing to a Taylor efficiency school one finds in the Soviet Union. It is engaged in teaching the scientific organization of work, showing the student "how to go about" his work, first with the simplest tools and later with more complicated machines. Its fundamental purpose is "to make accessible to the working masses and to the organizers of work the methods for steadily improving their job." It has all the laboratories necessary for a careful study of motions, fatigues and strains, and the performance of various tasks—a bio-mechanical laboratory, a psychotechnical and psycho-physiological laboratory, as well as a pedagogical department and a "social engineering laboratory."

Four to six month courses are given to unskilled young workers from the ages of eighteen to twenty, who are registered as unemployed and who are sent to the institute from the labor exchanges. These courses give the young workers a training which would take them several years to obtain as apprentices in factories. When their qualifications are thus raised, they can secure well-paid and regular jobs chiefly in the metal industry which the institute is specially equipped to serve. Some seven hundred students is the capacity of the Moscow institute and about 1,300 more are accommodated by the courses in the six branches of the institute in other industrial cities. The institute also serves during the summer months a group of older men who come to improve their expertness as instructors in factory technical schools. Their purpose is to learn the methods of

the institute and to apply them as far as is possible in the factory schools.

The institute publishes, under the editorship of its director, A. K. Gastev, a monthly journal called "*Establishment of Labor Power*." It contains material on the work of the institute, columns of correspondence from its branches and the factories to which its students have gone, and articles describing methods of training workers in somewhat similar institutions in other countries.

THE UNIONS AND SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT

The close relationship of the unions to the economic organs of the state has already been mentioned. One should note also that the appointment both of trust directors and managers of factories is made with the consent of the unions. The latter have no power of final decision over these matters, but they can, in effect, practically control the appointments to many of these positions in the administration of the industries.

Although minor differences on production questions may arise between the unions and the economic authorities, their relations, on the whole, are close and cordial. The presidents of the unions help to lay the corner stones of new plants. The economic administrators cooperate with the unions in granting the "Order of the Hero of Labor" to old workers who have given long and valuable service to the industry. The C. C. T. U. and the Supreme Council of National Economy issue joint statements suggesting new ways to increase the productivity of labor; while the unions run popularity contests in which they discuss "who is the best factory boss" in the country. The workers' correspondence

pages of the union organs as well as *Pravda* are full of daily evidences of this "united front" of union and trust for the construction of industry and the improvement of its efficiency. Due to this active collaboration, it goes without saying that productivity is never raised at the expense of the workers' standard of life. This point is continually emphasized. For example, in a statement on "Rationalization of Industry and Trade Unions" the *Trade Union Bulletin* of the C. C. T. U. says:

"The rationalization of Soviet industry differs in principle from that practised in capitalist countries. It is understood that there can be no question here of any worsening of the conditions of labor, all the gains of the worker, in general, remain unchanged. The very idea of the possibility of rationalization at the expense of the workers is absolutely precluded."

It goes on to say that this "rationalization," or the improvement of scientific efficiency in production, should mean an increase and not a decrease in the labor force, and also that the program calls for not only increases in production, but improvement in the conditions of work, factory sanitation and the protection of labor. "The trade unions," it finishes, "insist that rationalization should not adversely affect the interests of the workers even in individual cases."⁸

The trade unions, as Lenin frequently declared, are the training schools where the workers learn their first lesson in running the workers' government. All the

⁸ *Trade Union Bulletin* of C.C.T.U., June, 1927. .

various ways that have been described to draw them into the field of production and to raise their efficiency are but classes in this school. Lenin had the industries of the country primarily in mind when he wrote of the trade unions:

"Their task is to move these millions and tens of millions of toilers from simple activities to higher forms of activities, never growing weary in moving them to the most difficult tasks, and thus to train greater and greater masses for the government of the country."⁴

Thus the workers are trained to produce soundly—and to rule and discipline themselves—in a country where they were only recently in slavery. Thus they are slowly and gradually educated to carry their individual and social load, as the Communists put it, "on the road to socialism."

⁴A. Losovsky, *Lenin and the Trade Union Movement*, p. 26.

CHAPTER XII

THE PARTY AND THE UNIONS

"WHATEVER may be said, no matter how much we ourselves and our opponents may criticize the work done, it cannot be denied that, during the nine years of Soviet rule we have created a trade union movement such as has never existed in the world before, centralized, firmly-welded, powerful, which boasts of almost two million *active* members; we have understood how to develop the cultural work on a broad basis; we have created a movement which during the whole period of Revolution has marched hand in hand with the Party. Together we founded the soviet rule; together we have fought and have built up socialism; and of this I am convinced, we shall build it up to the end."

These were the closing words of M. Tomskey, Chairman of the C. C. T. U., in his report on trade union work, to the Fifteenth Conference of the Communist Party of the U. S. S. R. in the fall of 1926. It is typical of the sort of peroration that may fall from the lips of any Russian Communist when he is talking at a union or Party meeting. And it expresses the almost unanimous feeling of the "conscious masses" of workers in that country.

Persons inquiring into unionism in the U. S. S. R. sometimes ask soviet leaders to explain how the Party

is related to the unions. Perhaps they expect the Russians to make some devious reply that will cover up the true relationship. They are usually surprised to hear them speak up eagerly and tell of the leading role that the Party has played in the unions from their very origin.

In 1917 when the Communists won the leadership of the government they also won the leadership in the unions. It was the Party, in fact, that first organized and developed many of the unions, although some of them, such as the printers and the clerks, were under the influence of the Mensheviks in the months between the March and October revolutions. But the advocates of "non-political" unions lost out in the stormy days. The unions went over to the Communists who had taught the workers to think politically. Under their leadership the seizure of state power was carried through, the civil wars fought, and the country cleared of foreign armies. The Communists point out that "the Revolution would have been impossible in Russia if even before the month of October, 1917, the Bolsheviks did not have the immense majority in all unions, for it is impossible to accomplish a social revolution outside or against their will."¹

When we talked to Joseph Stalin, Secretary of the Communist Party of the U. S. S. R., he explained quite candidly that the Party leads and guides the policies of the unions. He described how it works in the unions through what are known as "fractions" and in the factories and enterprises through what are known

¹ A. Losovsky, *The Role of the Labor Unions in the Russian Revolution*, p. 27. This statement by Losovsky is prefaced by the observation that the "Bolsheviks have acquired a preponderating influence in the labor movement [of Russia] because they express 'plainly and methodically the interests of the classes which struggle and labor.'"

as "cells" or "nuclei." No orders are given by the Party to the unions. The unions have no official representatives in the Party; the Party no official representatives in the union. There is no formal relationship. Unions do not affiliate and pay dues to the Party as they do to the Labor Party in England. But the individual members of the "fraction" do their best to carry into effect the Party decisions on union questions as they are laid down at Party congresses such as the one above mentioned where Tomskey delivered his report.

Stalin said, furthermore, that the Party is popular with the masses of workers in the unions. They know that it has stood the test in all the crises that the Russian working class has gone through in its struggles for power. They regard it as the vanguard—the most politically intelligent section of the working class. And they know also that it does not stifle free discussion and active criticism in the unions. In fact, it has recently exerted its utmost power to stimulate this discussion and the active participation of the rank and file in the wide range of union activities.

The proletarian dictatorship, Stalin might have added, does not mean the dictatorship of the Communist Party over the unions. It does mean the dictatorship of the working class through its most enlightened and energetic elements—the Communist Party—working through the government, the unions, the cooperatives and many voluntary organizations. It is a dictatorship over the remnants of the bourgeois classes in Russia and not over the institutions of the working class.

Writing of the Seventh Congress of the Trade Unions in 1926, Walter Duranty, the well-informed correspondent of the *New York Times*, brings out the

strength of the unions and their voluntary acceptance of Party leadership:

"It is true that the unions are generally content to follow the lead of the Communist Party—to which the majority of their leaders and more active members belong—but this is not always the case, neither now nor in the past as the Communists well know.

"Which means that Joseph Stalin, even were he the absolute Party boss that home and foreign critics often claim, would by no means be the unchallenged Dictator of Russia. Premier Lenin himself, on one occasion, yielded to the labor federations when he was compelled to abandon a scheme of industrial conscription."²

Mr. Duranty has probably been able to gather little evidence that the trade unions would be inclined to resist the influence of the Party so long as it continues to work within the unions along the present lines. There are, to be sure, differences in the union movement and in the Party as to what the policy of the unions should be, and those differences are frequently aired. But the fundamental relationship between unions and Party is as outlined by Stalin. The union workers are proud of the Party when its members in their midst labor devotedly and energetically to help them raise their standards of living. But they are not slow to criticize it when it runs counter to their wishes. As Tomsky puts it, "Our workers are not meek. They are not shy to criticize any trade union leader, Party or non-Party. They know how to vote not only with one hand, but with two fists if necessary." And Tom-

² *New York Times*, Dec. 1, 1926.

sky probably understands the mind and moods of the Russian worker better than any man in the world.

The number of Communists in the union movement, on its committees and in its offices, is always shown in union reports. In their passion for statistical classification the Russian unions, in all their reports, list not only the number of women, youths under twenty, students, minor nationalities, and office workers; they inevitably put down the exact number of Party men and Communist Youth Organization members in the work, as well as the number of "candidates" who are on their way to becoming members of these organizations.

In studying these statistics the fact stands out plainly that the nearer one approaches the top of the trade union structure, just as in the structure of the soviet government itself, the more Party members one finds in the congresses and committees. Altogether only about eight percent of the total membership of the unions are Party members, yet the percentage of Party members, and candidates for membership in the Party, grows as we move toward the top of the union apparatus. The latest figures for 1927 are as follows:

| | <i>Percentage of Communists</i> |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Members of Factory committees..... | 29.7 |
| Administration of <i>ooyezd</i> (county) departments of separate unions | 42.8 |
| County trades councils (inter-union)..... | 80.0 |
| Administration of provincial departments of separate unions | 59.5 |
| Presidium of provincial inter-union councils..... | 90.9 ^a |
| Central committees of separate unions..... | 86.3 |
| C. C. T. U..... | 96.9 |

^a It should be remembered that the presidium is the small management board of the union chosen by the executive committee. The full executive

It will be noted that the inter-union bodies have a higher percentage of Party members than the separate union administration at the same level, due to the fact that the presidiums of the central councils are smaller bodies composed of the most active members selected from all the unions of the district. Naturally, more Communists are included.

At the All-Russian Congress of the Trade Unions in 1926, attended by 1,295 delegates, about 85 percent were Party workers. In the national congresses of the separate industrial unions 60 to 70 percent are members; while in the regional and provincial congresses of separate unions only 30 to 40 percent are *partini*.

The percentage of Party members in the factory and local committees varies from union to union. In the medical workers and art workers union it runs as low as 13 and 14 percent. It is highest in the mine, paper, water transport, textile, chemical and metal workers' unions. In general, it may be said that the number of Party members in the lower trade union bodies has been decreasing in recent years. Tomskey reviewed the situation in the speech from which we have quoted, when he said: "In 1925 about 36.2 percent of the members of the factory councils were Communists, now only 29.7 percent are; the quota of non-party workers who have been enlisted in the work, has thus increased. The same applies to the commissions (sub-committees). Last year 24.3 percent of them were Communists; now there are only 14.4 percent."

As we have noted elsewhere, the former method of voting by list in the shop committee elections has been

committees of these provincial trades councils have a much smaller percentage of Party members. Even in Leningrad, the "cradle of the Revolution," only 60 percent of the executive committee of the inter-union council are Party people; in some provinces the proportion runs as low as 40 percent.

done away with. The Communist cell now makes known its choice of candidates, many of whom, incidentally, may be non-Party workers; but it does not put over a slate and prevent other nominations. One often finds the workers rejecting some of the candidates proposed by the Party, while electing others, either Communists or non-Communists, who have not been supported by the Party cell. It also frequently happens that for a shop committee with, for example, five to be elected, the Communists will put up fifteen candidates; some fifty or more will be nominated from the floor, and possibly one or two of the Communist-supported ones will be elected.

Another manifestation that throws some light on the Party's relation to the unions is the conflict of interest that crops out occasionally between the Communist who is Director of the enterprise and the Communist who is a union officer. The Red Director will hold out for maximum production and wages that will permit his factory to make the greatest profit. The Communist in the union will fight for his constituency and all the wages he can get for them. Conflicts of this kind are usually thrashed out in the Party local in which the interests of the union and of the economic administration are both represented. On the whole, however, the Communists with the broader outlook, no matter what position they hold, will keep in mind the interests of the workers as well as the long-range view of the industrialization of Russia and the need for the accumulation of capital. The only point we make here is that the Communists in the unions are, as a rule, the ones who fight hardest for the rights of the workers. In a few instances, however, these leaders have been

found to collaborate too closely with the managers of state industry without sufficiently consulting the working masses. This sort of alliance produced the "spring strikes" of 1925 in the textile industry. In such cases the Party men involved are likely to receive stiff rebukes from their organization. And those who become bureaucratic and dictatorial toward the rank and file are likely to find themselves suddenly demoted. The mobility of the Party is quite as remarkable as the efficiency of its disciplinary machinery.

But no matter how high he may climb, either in the union or in the trusts, the Party member may not bring home a monthly salary of more than \$112.50 in the big cities, and no more than \$90 in the provinces. He is not likely either to grow fat or to indulge in riotous living on such a budget. And if he does, he will be either expelled from the Party or turned over to the proper courts for punishment for "conduct unbecoming a leader of the proletariat."

In conclusion it should again be emphasized that the average Russian industrial worker does hold the Party in the greatest love and respect. He realizes that the workers are its dominating element and that its members, with a few exceptions (for human nature still operates in the U. S. S. R.), are the most energetic, studious, intelligent and conscious members of the unions. The Russian worker finds it difficult to understand how the working class in any country can help but look for leadership to this revolutionary party. Members of foreign labor delegations who have gone to the Soviet Union with their usual prejudices against Communists at home have been surprised to find the Party in Russia something that only the most devoted, worthy and

capable workers can join—an organization which carries the very torch of the Revolution that has changed the Russian worker from the status of slave to that of free man and cooperative governor of the country. Unless one appreciates this situation and the sympathetic feeling of the Russian worker toward the Communists, one cannot fully comprehend the role of the Party “fraction” in the union.

In one of the books on “Trade Union Literacy” issued by the Leningrad Council of Trade Unions, appears a drawing which represents in a graphic manner the relation of the Party to the unions and to the economic life of the country. On the lower right hand side of the drawing is a huge motor marked “The All-Soviet Union Communist Party.” The core of this humming center of energy is labelled the “Communist Fraction.” Running from the motor to a great drive wheel called the “Working Class” is a belt labelled “Trade Unions.” The drive wheel is turning the machinery of the mills, mines and smelters pictured in the upper left hand corner. Behind the motor is a silhouette of Lenin, his hand upraised toward the industries.

CHAPTER XIII

TRADE UNION DEMOCRACY

Is there democracy in the Soviet trade union movement? Is there freedom of expression? Do the workers feel as though they are "slaves of the state," or do they feel like actual participants in their union? These are questions that can readily be answered by those who have watched the Russian worker in action. It must be remembered again, and in the first place, that great numbers of Russian workers have been through the fires of revolution. They have faced the bullets and bombs of counter-revolutionists and foreign armies. After such experience one can hardly expect them to be docile, slavish creatures afraid to face the gavel of a chairman. But some of their foreign critics accuse them of being just this. In the second place, as is commonly known, the Russians are ardent talkers, and often good talkers.

In general meetings of workers in the factory, one observes workers' democracy in action. At several such meetings I have seen the president of a provincial organization met with a storm of questions and mercilessly attacked by rank and file workers, men and women who disagreed with his policy in connection with the making of a new collective agreement. And in small meetings of cooks and chambermaids in hotels I have heard the policy of the union agent assailed by the work-

ers who showed not the slightest evidence of fear, deference or reticence in her presence. Those workers who are dissatisfied are given every opportunity—more than that, they are definitely encouraged—to voice their complaints and their discontent in meetings as well as through the union papers.

Walk into a congress of Russian workers, the last All-Union Congress of the C. C. T. U., for example. One finds about 1,300 delegates present. They are not, as in many countries, all the representatives of the Central Committees of national unions. In fact, all of them were elected at provincial congresses, and two thirds of them are men and women from the provinces. About one-sixth of them have come directly from the lathe and the loom and the plow. Only one-sixth are officials from the higher ranks of the national unions who have been selected at provincial congresses. Some thirty-three nationalities are represented and nearly one hundred women delegates are present.

This being the set-up of the personnel at the congress, do the workers from the district organizations and the factories sit back and listen passively to the upper one-sixth? On the contrary, they are the first to send up their names to take part in the discussion. And their turn to speak comes in the order that their names are received by the chairman. Speakers are not "recognized" by an arbitrary chairman. They simply wait their turn on the list. In this congress it is very common for one hundred or more delegates to pass up their names to speak on one subject; in fact 216 passed up their names to speak on the report of the executive, and 300 asked for the floor to discuss the report of the Commissar of Labor. When this happens the congress decides how many speakers it wants to hear on the sub-

ject. If the number is limited to 50 or 75 the various provinces and industrial unions will then decide which of their speakers they want to represent them. Thus no opinion held by any group is smothered, as so frequently happens in the conventions of American unions. There is no favoritism and no railroading. The delegates enjoy the fullest freedom of the floor compatible with the size of the congress and the length of the sessions. And resolutions or amendments may be offered from the floor at any time and must be considered.

The same is even more true of the congresses of separate industrial unions where the delegates express their opinions with a confidence and a freedom characteristic of the owners of industry. For example, in the congress of the agricultural and forest workers' union in January, 1926, out of 565 delegates over 100 actually took part in the discussion on the report of the Central Committee. And at the congress of the water transport workers, in the same month, 90 speakers participated in the discussion on the executive's report. In the lower congresses, such as those held in the provinces, an even larger percentage of delegates are heard in the discussions. For example, at the North Caucasus Inter-Union Congress, in 1926, 176 delegates signed to discuss the major report.

It is reported that the number taking part in these debates is growing from year to year. Eleven times as many delegates took part in the discussions at the agricultural workers' union congress in 1926 as participated in 1923. And fifty of the one hundred were *batraki* (hired farm workers), wood cutters, shepherds, besides a good showing of women and young workers.

The character of the discussion is another point worth special mention. The delegates from the workshop show

no special deference toward the highest officials. They not only call them "Comrade" but the tone of their voice and the vigor and spirit of their remarks show that they fear no one and are free to say all they have in their hearts, no matter how far it may run counter to the administration.

And the leaders themselves seem to be somewhat different from labor officialdom in certain other countries. They are not continually resorting to self-congratulation, smugness or backslapping. There is little oratory for oratory's sake, few meaningless generalities, a minimum of empty phrase-mongering. They have, on the whole, a due amount of modesty, earnestness, devotion, idealism, warmth and what Americans most admire—"horse sense." Tomsy, Chairman of the C. C. T. U., is particularly blessed with these gifts, as well as with an alert sense of humor that keeps the congresses to which he reports in an uproar of laughter.

Perhaps these union leaders are helped by the fact that they live on about the same economic level as the better paid of their constituency, and the gap between them and the lowest paid is nothing to compare with other countries. The fact that most of them, at least in the higher categories, are Communists may also have something to do with their qualities of leadership. Incidentally, they do not look on their positions as "life jobs" or on the trade union movement as their profitable vocation. They do not fight for jobs in our Western way, and when there is spirited competition, the votes are honestly counted. As one leader expressed it, "Our men are not mere *chinovniks* (government officials unpopular under the czarist regime) carrying brief cases. To make good in the movement they must be real organizers and executives, and above all they must be

close to the mass of the workers." There is no place for "career men" in the leadership of the Russian unions.

At the regular congresses, the leaders all give exhaustive verbal reports on their various departments. They do not give final opinions on what should be done. They simply open up the subject, and throw out points for discussion from the floor. They have usually prepared and mailed out in advance a lengthy factual report full of well-tabulated material on every phase of their stewardship during the preceding period. The delegates not only use this report as a basis for attack and criticism, but also the leaders' opening speeches at the congresses.

There has also been a very noticeable increase in recent years in the number of workers participating in the general factory meetings to discuss new collective agreements and other local as well as national questions. When the fabkoms make their reports to the rank and file, or to the factory delegates' meetings every two or three months, there is an extended and businesslike discussion. There is not the slightest indication of the steam roller. And there is also the important right to recall these committees at any time—the same right to recall that is enjoyed by the membership from the top to the bottom of the union structure.

SHOP COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

Local elections are also an indication of the participation of the workers. In the shop committee elections in recent years, from 65 to 70 percent of the workers have turned out to departmental and general meetings, to nominate, discuss and vote on their candidates. As we have noted elsewhere, in the more recent elections, a smaller percentage of those elected have been Com-

munists—about 30 percent. This figure would not seem to indicate that the Party or the government are riding roughshod over the wishes of the rank and file.

These elections to the fabkoms are, in a sense, the test of the whole system of workers' democracy in the unions. We may mention some of the provisions in the official instructions issued by the unions for the conduct of these elections. So far as we have been able to check them we have found them rigorously carried out.

The preparation for elections should begin not later than one month before they are to take place, and the plans are fully discussed at the general meetings in smaller factories and in the delegates' meetings of the larger plants. Also, in the larger factories where they have "departmental committees" these should be elected first at departmental meetings to which the fabkom makes a report on its work, and at which no other subject is on the agenda save these reports.

At the general or delegates' meeting, prior to the election of the full fabkom, an "elections committee" is chosen consisting of from five to nine persons nominated from the floor. It should contain no members of the old fabkom. The function of this committee is to take care of all matters connected with the nomination and election of the new fabkom.

Candidates for the new committee are chosen in several ways. First, they are chosen at the departmental meetings. To be a candidate from a department a worker must have received more than half the votes of those present at the departmental meeting at which more than half of the workers in the department must be present. In addition, candidates may be nominated by other groups of workers. The old factory committee itself makes no nominations and prepares no lists.

Neither does the "election committee" make nominations of its own. It merely prepares the list of those duly nominated by the departments and groups of workers.

The formal election meetings are held one or two weeks after the nominations are completed. In the larger factories, it is a meeting of special "electors" who have been chosen in every department, one to five, six or seven workers, depending on the instructions given by the union involved. Two-thirds of these "electors" must be present with their mandates to vote. The other workers of the factory may also be present to discuss, but not to vote. Only the "electors" vote. In smaller factories, where there are no "electors," all the workers are permitted to vote. However, at these general election meetings in small factories, more than one half of all the workers must be present to make the election valid.

The meeting, which takes up no other matters except the election, is usually opened by the old shop committee, after which a presidium for the meeting is elected, just as at all Russian union congresses a special presidium for the congress only is elected as soon as the congress opens. After this presidium is elected, the report of the "elections committee" is heard. The chairman reads aloud the names of the candidates, after which the workers make further nominations from the floor. There is no limitation on the numbers of these nominations. The meeting then chooses tellers to count the votes. The candidates are voted on separately. But before each one is voted for, any worker is allowed to discuss his merits and his qualifications for the post. Those nominees are elected who receive an absolute majority of the votes of the "electors." In case not less than one third of the

"electors" contend there has been anything wrong with the election, and demands a new one, the union must call a new election within two weeks.¹

This system of free nominations, thorough discussion and preliminary preparations, is not confined to the elections of the factory committees. It is used, too, in the elections of the administrations of provincial departments of the separate unions. This administration, as we have noted, is elected at the provincial congress. But the delegates do not wait till they get to the congress to have a list presented to them by an official "machine." On the contrary, the nomination of candidates begins in the factories. General meetings are called, and a preliminary list prepared by the provincial administration is presented. Any worker, however, may be nominated, and his name added to the list, even though he is not a delegate to the provincial congress. Workers receiving 50 percent of the votes of those present at these factory nomination meetings, get their names on the list. These nominations are turned over to a special committee elected the first day the congress meets. This committee works over the list and has it approved by the congress. Then each name is discussed and voted on separately. Those receiving the highest number of votes comprise the new provincial committee.²

ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY

The whole conception of workers' servility and leaders' tyranny, as it is frequently expressed by foreign critics of the Soviet government, arises out of a failure to understand the fundamental conditions underlying

¹ "Instructions of C.C.T.U.," *Trood*, No. 135, Jan. 1, 1926.

² *Trood*, Aug. 30, 1927.

industrial relations in the Soviet Union. There can be no systematic intimidation of the worker where the economic basis for intimidation has been removed. One need only glance at the Labor Code to appreciate this point. There is no longer—in state industries at least—the boss who holds all economic power, and with it all political power, as in other countries. There is no longer the terrorized worker who can be dismissed with a wave of the hand without redress, and who is then thrown upon his own to look for a new job. There is no relationship that makes the boss a “master” over the worker. The subordinate wage slave has become the citizen with full economic rights.

It is because the worker holds this position that he is so robustly critical of his union officials, his factory management and the government officials whom he has elected. Feeling it is his state, and his union, he knows he has the right to voice his criticism of both. And if the Communist does not serve him well in local union office, he frequently exercises his right to pitch him out and put in a non-Communist.

There are thus a large number of outlets for the expression of criticism, both at the elections and at various meetings. Consider some of the avenues through which it may go,—department meetings in the shop, general factory meetings, delegates’ meetings, electors’ meetings, factory committee meetings, meetings of subcommittees, production conferences and committees, special meetings of the “activists,” county conferences of the separate unions or of the inter-union provincial bodies, national congresses of the separate unions and of the C. T. U., as well as special demonstrations and political meetings. Or the rank and filer, if not elected to higher union office, can appear before any of the various de-

partments from the factory to the top, at executive committee meetings and presidium meetings. These are a few of the avenues of expression within the union itself, not to speak of written contributions to wall newspapers, union and inter-union journals and the workers' correspondence sections of the general newspapers such as *Pravda* where workers seem to criticize their trust directors and muck-rake their managers with abandon. There are also the elections to the soviets, and all the various clubs and cultural-educational classes and circles and schools through which the worker can train himself for further participation in governmental bodies. Finally there are many social and cooperative organizations that come outside the sphere of the union and the soviet government through which the worker may express himself.

So far as one can learn the policy of union leaders through reading their reports and speeches and talking with them, their primary interest is to evoke still further expression from the masses, to make them altogether articulate, to educate them without fear that by so doing they may become "radical" or obstreperous or so educated that they will oust the leaders from their jobs. The leaders, on the other hand, seem actually thirsty for new blood in the unions and do their utmost to develop it.

SELF-CRITICISM

Another thing that one notices is the inquiring and self-critical character of the reports of the unions. In these reports they are forever referring to some job that was not done well by themselves or by those above or below them. In their reports to congresses they seldom

soft pedal their shortcomings. They specify the resolutions and instructions that have not been carried out. They name the units of the organization that have not been efficiently run or sufficiently sensitive to the thoughts and desires of the masses. If the collective agreements have taken too long to make, they say so and specify what unions and localities are in error. In fact, the Russians have a world reputation for self-criticism. Their papers and reports are full of it. They are always condemning their own errors and admitting their weaknesses. Whole books have been compiled by enemies of Soviet Russia who simply quoted from this mass of self-critical material appearing regularly in their speeches and printed reports. Furthermore, they make frank and objective studies of specific situations with a view to improving the union work. Here is a sample list of the problems that were studied by the Trades Council of the Moldavian Republic and reported on at their congress in 1926: the system of dues collections, the condition of the finances in some of the local unions, the results of the budgeting plans of the union for 1926, the methods of fixing wage indexes, the work of the production committees in a local butter factory, the results of the collective agreement campaign in certain unions, the conditions of work among women in certain sugar factories, the results of the cultural work done among women household servants.

It may be added that the leaders, not only in their reports to congresses and conferences, but also in their articles in the union press, show that they realize the dangers that beset every union organization in every country—bureaucracy, indifference to the wishes of the rank and file, even corruption, petty embezzlements and

misappropriation of funds by lower trade union functionaries. They have been the first to point out weaknesses of this kind when they have crept in as they tended to in 1923 and 1924, particularly. Andreev, President of the Railroad Workers, wrote at that time of the "formalistic spirit remaining from the days of War Communism," of the "lists" that were sometimes voted on *en bloc* without opportunity for discussion, and of the excess of voluntary contributions then being made by the workers for various social purposes. He and Tomsky and the other leaders have fought vigorously against these tendencies, and are still combating them wherever they appear.

ACTIVE WORKERS

The extent to which the members of a union actually carry on its daily activities is always a good indication of the health and morale of a union, as well as of its essential democracy. In this respect the Russian unions stand first among all the unions in the world. Their reports always list the number of workers who hold responsible positions, or who do some sort of union work in the plant. These are called the *activists*. All those in a given plant comprise a body known as the *active*. They include most of the workers already mentioned—the fabkom members, sub-committee members, dues collectors, delegates, electors, mutual aid society officers, and departmental representatives. But they do not cover the paid officials and functionaries in the county, provincial and higher offices of the unions.

The number of "activists" reported from unions representing 6.8 million members on January 1, 1927, is given as follows:

| <i>Category of Work</i> | <i>Number of Organizations Reporting</i> | <i>Number of Activists in these Organizations</i> |
|---|--|---|
| Elected members of factory and local committees | 46,299 | 222,072 |
| Subcommittees working under the factory and local committees: | | |
| Wage-Conflict | 30,415 | 62,317 |
| Protection of Labor | 32,439 | 123,918 |
| Cultural-Educational | 32,657 | 158,050 |
| Production | 18,101 | 107,266 |
| Auditing | 35,222 | 107,497 |
| Dept. Bureaus and Agents..... | | 22,213 |
| Members of Delegates' Meetings | | 308,067 |
| Dues Collectors | | 139,408 |

Making allowance for a certain duplication, the total number comes to over 1.2 million. Among the 10,000,000 trade unionists of Russia the number would probably reach 2,000,000 if we included those who are active in clubs, mutual aid societies and production conferences. The most conservative estimates would place from 10 to 25 percent of the workers in the ranks of the *actives*, depending on the character of the union, the cultural standards of its members, and the intensity of its organization work. The percentage of activists in all the unions is increasing each year.

In American unions the number of workers holding corresponding voluntary jobs in the shops and primary union organs would probably not come to more than two percent. Indeed not more than five to twenty percent attend meetings. More come, of course, when special issues are at stake. But they could hardly be called "active" in the sense that the Russians use the term. And the unions in the United States seem to have done

nothing to count the number of their active members and very little to arouse them to further activity. The "paid men" do most of the work, assisted, even in the more progressive unions, by only a small number of the rank and file. Of course, it must be remembered that by and large the American workers are strongly individualistic, while the Russian workers have become the most "socially minded" in the world.

In the Russian unions conferences of the most militant activists in a particular plant or district are frequently held to enliven and spur on their work. I remember one such conference of textile workers held in provincial headquarters in Moscow. They discussed a great variety of subjects very vigorously, and exchanged practical experiences. A few of their decisions are still in my note book:

"Still more workers should be drawn into the daily work of the union, and more authority should be given to the decisions of the general workers' meetings. . . . The best way to carry on mass work is through the shifts and departments. Meetings should be held more often among the smaller groups of workers."

"The organization of temporary control committees should be increased to help with the production work. The raising of wages should go hand in hand with the lowering of costs, the increase in productivity, the process of rationalization and mass production.

"Educational work among the village workers should be brought nearer home. The factory committees should take care of this and see that there are more shop papers, 'family readings,' radios, and

'loud readings.' There should be more 'red corners' in the villages.

"Among the national minorities the educational work should be intensified especially in liquidating illiteracy and in providing literature in the language of the nationality."

Suggestions on all phases of trade union work were made by these workers who gather once a month to check up on their work. These were the vanguard of the activists learning new methods to improve their own performance, and new ways to stir the others into more creative activity.

NEW BLOOD

Another point that needs to be emphasized in describing the participation of the Russian workers in their unions, is the high proportion of new members elected to union office. It is not the same "old gang" holding office perpetually, not the same "bureaucracy" as such a group is rightly called, wherever it exists, either in Russia or America. The figures on the new members elected to the Russian factory committees are the best evidence that the lowest units in the trade union organization are anything but stagnant. As we have noted in Chapter IV, 65 percent of fabkom members holding office in January, 1927, had been newly chosen at the previous election. In the textile union, in which I was specially interested, the percentage of newly elected members of fabkoms was 71.7. This is an astonishing performance. To have such a high proportion of new blood in the lowest trade union organization is certainly one of the healthiest indications of union democracy.

And in the higher union bodies the percentage of new

members elected ran almost as high. For example, on the same date it was reported that 55.3 percent of the members of the C. C. T. U. were new incumbents, while on the Central Committees of all the separate industrial unions the percentage reached 68 percent. Even on the presidiums of the Central Committees 56 percent of the 210 officials were newly chosen at the last elections. In the administration of the provincial departments of the separate unions the figure for the newly elected was 65 percent. In the highest offices—president and secretary—of these provincial departments, where most continuity would be expected, the figures showed that 548 out of 1,315 were newly chosen at the previous elections. All of these figures indicate the amount of fresh energy that is being drawn into the offices at all levels of the union structure. Thus the fight is carried on against bureaucracy in the Russian unions. They are considered a sort of school where every new member “learns to participate in practical social building.”

We may close this chapter with a quotation from Anna Louise Strong, an American who has lived in Russia for years, and who has paid special attention to the developments in the unions. She writes:

“Nowhere else in the world have the workers such freedom of discussion regarding their jobs and the industry in which they take part. This is not generally recognized abroad because certain restrictions of general ‘free speech’ and the prohibition of any but one political party, hide from the average intellectual that very vast field of workers’ life in which they have never before dreamed of daring to express themselves.”²

² *Workers’ Life in Soviet Russia*, p. 28.

The Russian worker is undoubtedly expressing himself more fully than at any time since the Revolution. He has become, as Tomskey has pointed out, more "sensitive." He demands more because he has an increasing sense of power and possession and rulership. He "belongs." He is the "governing class," and he knows it. And he lives nearer to a condition that might be described as "industrial democracy" than does any organized group of workers anywhere in the world today.⁴

⁴ Since this chapter was written, the *Trade Union Bulletin* (February, 1928) announces a significant advance in union democracy. It reports that "the presidium of the C. C. T. U. has recently decided that the elections of delegates to trade union congresses should be direct, i.e. should be held directly by factories and institutions. . . . Only in cases where the enterprises are scattered over a large territory and each one of them employs a small number of workers, is it allowed to elect delegates to the national congresses at local congresses or conferences." Previously only the delegates to provincial and local congresses had been elected directly. The new decision means that the rank and file in the factories will now vote directly for their delegates to national congresses.

CHAPTER XIV

CULTURAL-EDUCATIONAL WORK

THE vast cultural and educational work being done by the unions impresses all visitors to Soviet Russia. We have referred to this "culture front" in describing the unions in a particular city, and in discussing the functions of the factory committee and all the higher units in the trade union structure. The subject is so important that it demands more extensive treatment.

One is likely to come in touch with the Russian unions first through some phase of this work. While visiting at the home of one of the former *intelligentsia*, the son of a well-known doctor in the back country of the Ukraine, I found that this young man, a worker in the Finance Department of the local government, was also the chairman of the cultural-educational committee in his office. He told me that he had been appointed by the head of the office committee to head this work because he had a good library of his own, both before and after the revolution, and knew a lot about books. In connection with his job, he had organized a library for his local union of soviet and commercial employees. The educational department of the national union had helped him with advice and several hundred books at reduced prices. He had organized "circles" in all the subjects in which his fellow-workers were interested—in dramatics, hunting, checkers, economics, winter sports. They had

opened a reading room, and he had subscribed for some twenty-five general magazines and technical, trade and political journals in which the group was most interested.

Through this non-Communist office worker, in this distant town of about 10,000 inhabitants, I learned more about similar activities carried on by various unions in the vicinity. I visited their central workers' club where plays, concerts, movies and lectures were being given. I looked in at their "red corners" where they were studying cooperation, music, needle work and the history of the Ukraine. I saw their circles where they discussed trade union methods, personal hygiene and the use of the radio. I noticed how they were stimulating the minds of workers who had been almost illiterate before the Revolution. Later I examined the "wall newspapers" in local offices and union headquarters, and sat in at a meeting of the presidium of the local trades councils where they discussed the qualifications of the various candidates to be sent by the unions to workers' high schools. All this gave me at least an introductory glance at the broad educational panorama of the Soviet trade unions.

During the following weeks I began to understand the full meaning of these manifold activities. The leaders and teachers told me that the main purpose of this branch of union activity is to give the masses the kind of education they demand. Some workers who have gone through all the revolutionary struggles have gained great political and social education. At the same time, such a worker may be illiterate or know little about the elementary principles of health. So he demands union courses to help round out his development in fields where he is deficient. He wants to enrich his whole

personality, not simply to add to his store of political wisdom. He wants what we call in America "adult education." On the other hand we find the raw village youth and workers from the farms coming to industrial centers for the first time. They have none of the revolutionary background of the other workers. They are thus good candidates for classes in current events or economics. They need to become "politically literate," as the Russians put it. Still another group of workers are the older ones who are comparatively backward and isolated because their homes are in villages and away from the factories where educational work is usually carried on. Their demands are still different from those of the other groups. Then there are unionists of the scores of minor nationalities, who require union classes and textbooks in their own language. The great strides that have been made in the cultural development of these peoples is described in other volumes of this series.

CLUBS

Let us examine some of the institutions through which the Russian worker takes part in educational and recreational activities. There is, first, the club. Practically every factory of any size has a club, or a group of factories may have a joint club, or it may be under the supervision of the trades council or the separate union, or be attached to the local Palace of Labor. In these clubs the workers spend their spare hours in reading, study, and recreation. Here they learn how to enjoy themselves in a collective, social way. The average club has an assembly room where some sort of meeting is usually in progress, classrooms for the various types of lectures and circles, a buffet or dining room, a bil-

liard and game room, a rest room, sometimes a gymnasium and a children's room, a library and reading room, occasionally a consultation room with a doctor and a nurse, a theatre and movie room which may be separate from the large meeting hall. Most clubs are, of course, equipped with radios, and practically all have a "Lenin corner."

The administrative board of the club is ordinarily composed of a group of workers elected by the membership of the club which is voluntary and open to any member of the union or unions involved. The board consists of a secretary, one member in charge of cultural-educational work, a treasurer, and, in the larger clubs, special persons in charge of theatricals, study circles, and so on.

Visit one of these clubs any night in the week and you will find all the rooms in use. Perhaps Geltzer, the great ballet dancer, will be entertaining an audience in the theatre, or the local branch of the "Blue Blouses" may be presenting a play of their own.¹ Classes will be crowded in the smaller rooms. The recreation rooms will also be in full swing with all the various indoor games the Russians have devised in recent years. The radio loud speaker will be contributing its share to the entertainment.

In the summer months the program is no less complete. The workers then go to their summer clubs, gardens or stadiums. In front of a park in Kiev, behind what was formerly the villa of a wealthy merchant,

¹ The "Blue Blouses" are members of the workers home-talent dramatic movement. That they are capably trained dramatists may be judged by the fact that artists from the Grand Opera and other theatres in Moscow and other cities coach and supervise their activities. The *New York Times* correspondent in Moscow writes, Nov. 6, 1927; "The dramatic movement in workers' and other clubs is one of the most successful experiments of the soviet regime."

I read the notice on the gate, "Come in to your cultural center, Comrades. Make use of the reading room." It was the summer garden of the chemical workers' union of the district. Still more beautiful gardens have been established in Kiev by the metal workers, the educational workers and other unions. In Moscow some ninety of these places are open every night during summer months, the best of them being under the control of the metal, textile and communal workers' unions. They serve hundreds of thousands of workers with open air lectures, concerts, movies, sports, cooperative buffets and libraries.

One of the best of these great recreation centers is the summer stadium of the soviet and commercial employees' union. It serves the members of sixteen clubs of this organization. The stadium is used throughout the day by the wives and children of the members, and after work, in the late afternoon and evening, by everybody. Some twenty-five thousand workers use it at least once a week. In addition to a well-sodded football and soccer field and a running track, we noticed within this one park the following: one free movie, and one where you pay a few kopeks, a shaded reading room with books, the current magazines and special "wall newspapers" for young readers, a long swimming pool under the trees, a game room for children, a chess room, a pavilion for artistic games, a choir, two orchestras, an open air café, places for bowling, boxing, croquet, basket ball, volley ball, tennis, wrestling and other games. It was Saturday night and some of the young workers were just marching out of the gates of the stadium to the country to spend the Sunday in villages near the city. Here were the members of one union apparently having the time of their lives doing things that only

the sons and daughters of the merchants and the nobility dared dream of before the Revolution. And specially noticeable was a spirit of orderliness and discipline combined with real spontaneity and a quiet friendly fellowship between the workers of both sexes. Not the slightest indication of rowdiness or "hooliganism," as the Russians call it. This was typical of all the many clubs we visited.

SPORTS

Physical culture, which was so much in evidence at this summer stadium, has received a tremendous stimulus in Russia during the last few years. The unions have played their full share in it, about ninety percent of all the physical culture clubs of the country being maintained by the unions. The C. C. T. U. formerly declared physical culture holidays, and now cooperates actively with the Society for Physical Culture in arranging these annual events. Most of the participants in these sports holidays, such as the 30,000 husky young workers who marched in Moscow on August 21, 1927, are unionists or the sons and daughters of unionists. Some 350,000 union members in the country take part in physical culture work of one kind or another. More than 150,000 are already members of physical culture circles, approximately 60 percent of whom are devoted to light athletics, 35 percent to football, and 34 percent to gymnastics. At least a third of the participants in these circles were women unionists. In fact, the girls make up a higher proportion than the men in certain types of sport.

You find union athletic fields and "water stations"—boating and swimming clubs—in almost every town and

city. Walk along the Moscow River beyond the Red October candy factory, and you come to the boat-house of the Moscow Provincial Council of Trade Unions. Members of all unions use it for rowing, boating and swimming. Take a motor boat and drive down the river. You pass the "stations" of the textile union, the metal workers and others, all with swimming instructors on the job teaching the sturdy youth of the union how to be at home in the water.

All over the country you find not only these "water stations" but sport stadiums and grounds in the process of construction on a grand scale. The Lenin stadium in Leningrad has just been completed. The Moscow Trades Council and the Food Workers' Union of Moscow have recently finished large stadiums. In considering these facts it should be remembered that before the Revolution there was, generally speaking, no such thing as games or sports for the workers of either

SEX.

RED CORNERS

The "red corner," to which we have referred a number of times, is a room or perhaps only the corner of a room in a factory, a department of a factory, a club, a workers' cooperative dining room, an apartment house, a school, a union headquarters, or a workers' rest home, where educational work is carried on similar to that in the clubs. Factory "red corners" are usually conducted by the educational subcommittee of the fab-kom. Its aim is to bring all the cultural work nearer to the union members, not all of whom are enrolled in the clubs. The "corner" provides newspapers, magazines, books, study courses. Talks are given and papers and books are read aloud to those workers who are still

illiterate. When the worker lives in the village, some distance from the factory, a "red corner" may be set up in the village library or cottage reading room; and travelling theatres, movies and lectures are brought close to his home. This work is specially important among seasonal workers from the villages whom you find largely in the sugar workers' and miners' union (turf workers). It is also very necessary in distant, thinly settled regions such as Kazakstan, Bashkiria, and Central Asia.

In these "corners," as in the clubs, we find the various "circles" in which every conceivable theme from the resolutions of the last Congress of Trade Unions to the care of infants is discussed. Production and technical subjects, as we have noted, have been popular in recent years since the drive for better production began. There are also hundreds of circles dealing with physical culture, politics, photography, dramatics, literature, amateur broadcasting, foreign languages, snow-shoeing, aviation, Leninism, heavy wrestling, natural science and rural economy—to give only samples of the wide variety of subjects taken up in these groups.

LIBRARIES

The libraries of the unions must also be specially mentioned. There are central workers' libraries at the trades council headquarters, circulating libraries run by the central committees and provincial departments of the unions, as well as libraries in the clubs and large factories. The Railroad Workers' Union has several hundred "station libraries" as well as over 3,000 travelling libraries, in addition to its regular club libraries. A typical provincial trades council library is the one in

Moscow used by some 10,000 workers active in trade union education in that city. Any union member, however, may use it. As in other libraries, the stairways leading to it are lined with charts and diagramed instructions telling the worker how to do research, how to read to the best advantage, giving suggested bibliographies on summer culture work, children's work, "how to get the most out of your vacation," charts on labor union growth and clippings from the day's newspapers. A "questions and answers box" is one of the most popular features of this library, the librarian being prepared to answer questions "on any subject."

EXCURSIONS

Another growing institution is the "excursion." The whole country is overrun, both summer and winter, with union excursions. Excursionists receive substantial reductions in railroad fares. There are excursions between one industry and another, and one factory and another. (Some factory clubs have special exhibitions showing graphically all the processes of production. These are, of course, visited by eager delegations of workers from other factories where such exhibitions have not yet been prepared.) Then we find also excursions on boats, excursions between cities, excursions between factory and village, between factory and the Red Army company, as well as mass excursions into the country. And there are smaller excursions to the hundreds of museums of every sort that have sprung up in recent years—museums on art, health, bird life, evolution, protection of labor, furniture, social hygiene, Revolution and technical subjects, to mention only a few. There are over fifty such museums in Moscow

alone. The Russian worker who has not been on an excursion to a museum of some kind is a rare animal. Excursions from city to city often take place on holidays. Over the Christmas holidays Leningrad and Moscow, for example, will exchange 5,000 trade union excursionists, many of whom have never been away from their home towns before.

Closely related to the trips to museums and trips to other cities, are the trips to the theatre. The unions, as we have indicated, have regular theatrical bureaus through which their members may purchase tickets at reduced prices—usually about fifty percent off. Visitors to Russia have remarked on the number of workers who crowd the opera houses, "kinos" and theatres. This is due to the facilities provided by the cultural departments of the unions. The Leningrad unions alone, in one year, distributed nearly 2,500,000 such tickets to their members, representing, it is estimated, about forty percent of the seating capacity of all the theatres in the city.²

FIGHTING ILLITERACY

The majority of the Russian people were illiterate before the Revolution. The unions were one of the first agencies to begin the work of "liquidating" this illiteracy. They have made extraordinary progress. As late as 1922 there were still a million members in the unions of manual workers who could neither read nor write. In 1921, 50 percent of the mine workers, 50 percent of the wood workers and 80 percent of the agricultural workers, for example, were still illiterate. By 1926, these had been reduced to 4.0, 6.5 and 18.4 percents respectively, the chief base of illiteracy still

² *Trade Union Bulletin*, No. 2, May 5, 1926.

being among the seasonal elements in these unions. Seasonal workers come from villages and return to them at the end of the working season. They are more difficult to reach with schools and union classes. In 1926, the metal workers had reduced their illiteracy to two percent, the chemical workers to six percent, the building workers to five percent, while some of the unions had entirely completed the task of eliminating illiteracy among their members.

SOME *Kult* FIGURES

The essential statistical information concerning some of the *Kult* (Russian abbreviation for cultural-educational) enterprises we have just mentioned must be compressed into a few lines, while the numbers for each of the 23 industrial unions are omitted. The figures are all for February 1, 1927:

Number of clubs in the country operated by the separate unions, 3,270; those run by inter-union bodies, 260; by several unions grouped together, 78. Out of this 3,608 some 3,480 reported on membership, giving a total membership of 1,158,513. This represents a gain of about 140,000 members over January, 1926.

Circles in clubs numbered 22,812 and the 22,531 reporting had 583,430 members. Of the 22,812 about 2,500 were physical culture circles.

Circles in lower union organizations and "red corners" numbered 51,931. Of these 48,741 reported a membership of 746,050, making a total membership in all reporting trade union circles of 1,329,480.

Libraries in clubs numbered 3,234, while the subscribers for the 2,966 reporting numbered 1,180,455.

Attached to lower trade union organs were 13,255

libraries. The 10,875 reporting gave the number of subscribers as 874,605, making the total trade union libraries in the country 16,489 and the total number of subscribers over 2,000,000.

"Red corners" numbered 26,743, the largest number being in institutions organized by the railroad, government clerks, metal and food workers' unions. There has been a tremendous increase in "red corners" in all the unions in the last two years.

TYPES OF CLASS AND MASS WORK

The unions classify their educational work roughly into political, trade union and technical education. The political work is carried on first in a "mass way," which consists of various devices for reaching the largest number of workers with material on political subjects. The frequent reports of union leaders on the "international situation" or on the "domestic situation of the Soviet government" are a part of this program, together with lectures, discussions, "between-shift-meetings" and mass meetings dealing with a wide variety of political and semi-political topics.

There is also what they describe as the "artistic presentation" of the same material. This may take the form of theatrical productions, motion pictures, "living papers" (the acting out on the stage of contemporary news events), articles in the "wall newspapers" and posters. Political education is also carried on in circles and classes for the more advanced workers who flock to the courses on economics, Russian history and "the theory and practice of Leninism."

So-called trade union education deals with a narrower range of topics closely related to union work. Here

the same methods are used. The mass education is, of course, intended to reach the rank and file. It does not deal with abstractions but with the daily needs and experiences of the average unionist. For example, in connection with the general and delegates' meetings, held at the factory during the period when collective agreements are under discussion, the union member learns the fundamentals of collective bargaining. The worker who takes part in the collection of dues acquires a rudimentary knowledge of union finance. On all the various committees in the enterprise, the workers increase their trade union understanding by carrying out some union task. But for the newcomer, the seasonal worker and the peasant fresh from the village, there will be also, before he reaches this stage of participation, plenty of literature and general organization talks on "Why join the union," and "What the union can do to protect your interests."

For the more interested workers, training schools are used to teach unionism. Schools for "trade union literacy" have been opened in many factories. Elementary schools of this kind have courses lasting four or five months, with classes once or twice a week. More advanced courses are given in classes attended by picked "activists" who spend from three months to two years in schools devised to produce efficient union leaders. The railroad men, the coal miners and the textile workers have schools of this kind in operation, under the direction of the national union. There are also special schools in the provinces and the counties for members of particular unions who are on the way to becoming union leaders. A "graduate" school for three hundred workers was opened in Moscow in the fall of 1927 with a two year course for advanced union workers from

the provinces. The funds for this school are given partly by the C. C. T. U. and partly by the separate national unions that will benefit by the training.

The technical education of workers is still more important. We have dealt with it in our chapter on the production work of the unions. In every factory we find young part-time workers, mainly between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, attending technical schools. In addition to these schools, there are also technical schools for special industries, such as the textile school in Moscow which serves all the factories in a large cotton trust. These schools are to train young workers to become specialists and engineers.

MAINTENANCE

Support for all these educational activities, as we have mentioned, comes from a number of sources. First, from the industry itself. In its agreements with the union, the trust agrees to pay into the educational fund of the union, say one percent of its monthly wages bill. In the second place, the funds come out of the member's dues, each county or provincial department of the union setting aside 10 to 25 percent for this purpose each year. The national unions, the trades councils and the C. C. T. U. also have special educational funds.

Funds for certain branches of cultural work, such as the building of clubs, may also come from the government budget. For example, the metal workers' union in the Ukraine, which in 1927 spent nearly \$2,500,000 for new club buildings, received part of this money from the trusts, a small amount from the district trades council, a little from the local state budget, some from

the Government of the Ukraine, some from the Government of the U. S. S. R. and some from the culture fund of the national union. This is, no doubt, an exceptional case. Ordinarily the majority of the funds for the various educational activities come from the budgets of the unions.

PUBLICATIONS AND PERIODICALS

We have seen what the unions have done to reduce illiterary among their members. Partly as a result of this work the circulation of periodicals and papers has steadily mounted. The union publishing houses have grown from 78 in 1922 to over 200 today. Either through their Central Committees, local organizations or trades councils the unions now issue some 23 newspapers and 90 magazines, the circulation of the former being over 900,000 and of the magazines about 800,000.* This is a creditable showing for a young labor movement, a great part of whose members have only recently learned to read. In Moscow alone are published nine newspapers and some 40 journals, the majority of the latter being official journals of the national unions.

The C. C. T. U. itself issues one production journal, one satirical magazine, a journal about club work, a scientific and literary trade-union-problem monthly of 250 pages, a daily newspaper with 75,000 circulation, a monthly news bulletin in four languages, and a number of other journals in cooperation with other organizations.

Among the outstanding publishers of union periodi-

* C.C.T.U. *Trade Union Bulletin*, March, 1927.

cals is the Leningrad Trades Council which issues a weekly bulletin, an illustrated journal called *Production Conference, The Leningrad Worker* (a 20-page illustrated fortnightly), and a statistical bulletin. The Moscow Trades Council issues the *Moscow Proletariat* (an illustrated monthly), the *Culture Front*, devoted to cultural-educational work, the *Blue Blouse*, a magazine for amateur union actors, the *Protection of Labor*, as well as an excellent statistical journal.

All 23 industrial unions issue official periodicals. These are subscription journals. They are not sent free to the membership. Thus the circulation is a true indication of the popularity of the journal. Besides, the prices are not low, some of them running as high as 30 kopeks, in order to make the journals self-supporting and not dependent on the trade union budget. The railroad workers' union has the highest percentage—37—of its members served by its official organs. Its daily newspaper, *Goodok* (The Whistle) alone runs off about 400,000 copies. The postal and telegraph workers, art workers, leather workers, educational workers, printing workers and paper workers all have more than 12 per cent of their members served by the union organ.

TRADE UNION DAILY PAPERS

Some of the daily papers deserve particular mention. *Trood* (Labor), the official organ of the C. C. T. U., is a four-page paper and the only general trade union daily in the world, with the exception of *Le Peuple* in France, which, though the organ of the French Confederation of Labor, is more like the common type of newspaper. *Trood* has a circulation of 75,000, chiefly in Moscow and the large cities, though it is read by

trade union activists all over the country and goes to thousands of union reading rooms and libraries. Its news concerns chiefly the union movement either in the Soviet Union or elsewhere, as it does not pretend to compete with daily papers like *Pravda*, *Izvestia* and other journals of large and general circulation issued by the Government or the Communist Party. In a typical issue of *Trood* you find a front-page editorial dealing with some union problem, followed by news items about the attacks on unions in China or the condition of some strike in Australia or Argentina. There will also be strictly union activity news from all parts of the U. S. S. R., or a signed article on production in soviet industry during the last year. A great many special articles will deal with such topics as the kind of theatres needed in workers' clubs, the workers' cooperatives in Poltava, football matches between the unions of Leningrad and Moscow, factory technical schools, news of Crimean sanatoria, the social insurance department and the work of labor exchanges. Special departments of *Trood* are devoted to theatre news, book notes, workers' letters, news of the trusts and syndicates, union announcements, reports on conferences and meetings.

Much more important, from the standpoint of circulation, is the four-page Railroad Workers' journal, *Goodok*, mentioned before. A typical issue in the summer of 1927 carries an editorial on the part played by the railroad men in moving the harvest, news about a delegation of Scandanavian workers coming to Russia, reports from correspondents, news about new engines, about theatres and books. Once a week a special insert will carry a continued story or a series of short stories. There also appears weekly a special edition in

which a page or two of local news is inserted dealing with one of the twenty-seven railroad systems. Other special sections of the paper cover peasants' problems, cooperatives, aviation and "Party Life." One of them is called "Helped by *Goodok*." This section aims to help any worker who sends in a complaint story about something connected with his daily work. The paper sees to it that the management of the road is interviewed as to the possibility of rendering the help needed. It may be a worker in a distant railroad town criticizing the workers' houses, or bad conditions in the local hospital. Or it may be some technical matter in which bad management is displayed. The reader of *Goodok* brings it to the attention of his paper which makes an effort to correct the situation. The worker correspondents of course take the lead in bringing these matters to light.

Another four-page daily is edited by the union of soviet and commercial employees. It is called "*Our Paper*." It carries some general news covering, perhaps, the Chinese wars, or a strike in Germany. The usual editorial will touch on the international situation or some topic of general working class interest. A whole page may be devoted to a report made by the Vladimir provincial department to the central committee of the union, or a long article on the "mechanization of bookkeeping in the cooperatives." There is usually a good deal about the "rationalization of the government apparatus" in which this union, composed largely of government clerks, is specially interested. Following this may come a half-page of short articles with the head-line query, "Who is the Best Director of Stores in Tambov?" The merits of various cooperative and government store keepers in that city will be de-

scribed by their several admirers—all of which serves to stimulate good executives. As in other daily papers there are drawings, cartoons and pictures that make the paper popular and easy to read.

The daily papers are not, as a rule, sent to individual subscribers through the post, but are forwarded in bundles to the paper's agents in offices and shops in the various towns and cities. The worker receives his paper daily from his agent, though if he is sick or away from employment an effort is made to deliver it to his home. These papers, in contrast to most American union papers, carry no advertising. This fact constitutes a further incentive to hustle for subscriptions.

UNION MAGAZINES

The two best illustrated union magazines of general circulation are issued by the trades councils of Moscow and Leningrad. The Moscow journal, *The Moscow Proletariat*, is a weekly of fifty pages. A typical issue will contain illustrated articles on International Cooperation Day, notes on the building of Moscow industries, an editorial on "Unemployment and the Struggle with Protectionism," pictures of the educational work of the textile union, material on housing cooperatives, a page of U. S. S. R. and international pictures, an "answers to questions" page, a story on how the Japanese workers live, a page entitled "To Help You on Your Vacation" (with a picture of some factory girls holding a class for peasant women in the village which is under their "patronage," and where they are spending their two weeks' vacation), a half dozen pictures of a leather factory, accompanied by a story of its daily life, pictures of a radio exposition in Moscow, instructions

on how to conduct an excursion without a leader, pages on sports and athletic games, letters from workers, pictures of rest homes, notes on summer work in the campaign to liquidate illiteracy, material on the relation of the "wall newspaper" to social insurance.

A sample issue of *The Leningrad Worker*, printed in clear, readable type, carries an article on wages in Leningrad for the first half of 1927, pages of notes from various unions, a story on the miners' congress of the Northwest district, an article on the struggle against accidents. Following this are short stories, poetry, workers' correspondence, pictures showing the medical examination of young workers in a metal factory, a radio section with answers to the questions of "radio lovers," pictures of workers' summer sanatoria in the Caucasus, an article on an astronomical observatory at a union rest home, pictures of some fifty yachts owned by the Leningrad unions, and a story on technical classes in clubs.

So much for general union periodicals. Those of particular unions are just as interesting, reflecting as they do the wide range of social, political, industrial and artistic matters in which the members are interested. All are calculated to bring the union closer to the daily life of the reading member and at the same time to interest him in events of wider import. Some typical union journals (and typical issues) are the following:

The "*Voice of the Textile Worker*" is a six-page little paper issued three times a week. (It is soon to become a daily with a circulation of 65,000). A representative issue in the summer of 1927 carries an editorial on the new harvest with a cartoon showing "Comrade Harvest" chasing a fleeing and frightened fat man called "Capital," news on the labor movement from

Tokio, Vienna and London, a short story on Sacco and Vanzetti, a list of contributions for airplanes from local unions constituting the paper's "Answer to Chamberlain," a story on "How We Lower Prices," a discussion on the two and three loom system, a picture of a silk factory in Samarkand, a story on fire losses headed "Take Care of Your Factories" with an account of the expenditure of \$115,000 on fire prevention in one large woolen plant, news about an international cooperative congress, a story on the organizing experience of the textile union in Briansk, some notes on excursions and on trade union "corners" in workers' rest homes, news on the reelection of the engineering and technical sections, and information about the contest for the best self-made artist in a provincial factory. From the Leningrad district special material is contributed on the new houses for workers, along with a story on the local arbitration courts. On still another page are reports about young pioneers, a children's story and an article showing how to help the street waifs, telling how one factory collected one hundred and fifty dollars for this purpose. Then there is the story of the death of an old revolutionist—a textile worker in an Orekofka plant, together with notes on sports, the union basket ball championship, and news about the textile workers who won the prize in a shooting contest conducted by the Moscow Central Trades Council. We find, also, news about a director of a factory who was discharged for taking in his relatives and friends instead of hiring through the labor exchange. Finally, there are special departments on radio, chess, workers' correspondence and books.

Reflected in the articles in this paper we have a cross-section of workers' life in Soviet Russia. None of the

stories are long. Cuts and illustrations are used to advantage in presenting the news.

Let us examine more briefly a few sample official journals of other national unions. Here is the "*Sugar Worker*," organ of the union of that name. It contains several articles on production, and plenty of pictures, including those of a union physical culture group. It carries a youth section and a radio department. Then we have "*The Public Caterer*," the well-illustrated journal of the Domestic and Hotel Workers' union. On the cover page of the number we happened to pick up, is a large picture of a bushy-whiskered peasant drinking tea out of his saucer in a cooperative tea room, the workers of which belong, of course, to this union. Then there are pictures and stories of model kitchens—for example the one in Ivanovo-Vosnesensk that serves meals to thousands of workers in their homes and at public dining rooms—articles on norms of payment, the work of the clubs in Tver, pictures from the whole world, a section called "Our Life" and a picture of the legal bureau of the union at a provincial headquarters.

The Public Health Workers' journal has sections on sanatoria and rest homes, a woman's page, and articles on new houses being built for union workers. It has articles on dramatic performances in the clubs and on the work of the Red Cross. The journal of the Chemical Workers has satire and laughter in it and plenty of union and general working class news. The Paper Workers' journal is equally prodigal in the use of pictures of its various union institutions; while the "*Proletarian Transport*" has a sports section, articles on literary work in the clubs and a page of wit and humor. The "*Railroad Worker*" has clear illustrations and is altogether a paper admirably adapted for reading in

clubs and reading rooms. The railroad workers, as a rule, read more than the members of other unions. Their daily has already been mentioned. Then we come to the journals of the Land and Forest Workers' Union, one being "*The Woman Land Worker*." Similarly well edited periodicals are "*The Agriculturist*," "*The Municipal Worker*," the "*Art Worker*" (a journal with a large circulation outside the strictly union field, widely read in general theatrical and musical circles), the "*Miner*," the "*Educational Messenger*," the "*Building Worker*," the "*Printer*," the "*Metal Worker*," the "*Public Teacher*," and the "*Voice of the Leather Worker*."

Many of these journals are the first literature of any kind read by workers in distant towns and country districts. In the larger towns they compete in popularity with the general magazines to be purchased at newsstands, and are always found on the tables of clubs, reading rooms, libraries and rest homes. These union journals not only keep the back-country worker informed of the work of his own union, but give him graphic news on the labor movement at large and on the acts and policies of the Soviet Government.

WALL NEWSPAPERS AND *Rabkors*

The "wall-newspapers," frequently mentioned in the foregoing, are something distinctly post-revolutionary Russian. Although generally used throughout the country by the Party, the Red Army, the cooperatives, the peasants' clubs, the youth organizations and the schools, most of them are to be found in factories, offices, and union headquarters. They are simply large sheets upon which appear news, stories, jokes, pictures,

cartoons, satire, poetry, in fact any form of expression that can be conveyed with pencil, ink, type or brush by the workers in the place. They are amateur and co-operative undertakings. All the material is strictly "home made" and stinging criticism of the management of the enterprise or the local union officialdom is not uncommon. These papers appear at intervals ranging from one week to three months.

The editor of the paper is a worker elected by the group of voluntary "wall newspaper correspondents." The upkeep of these papers is borne by the fabkom. In some of the larger plants, the papers are gradually transformed into regular house organs, and are issued in a different form and circulated by the thousands. In such cases they cease to be "wall" papers and become, instead, newspapers of the factory for wide distribution. In still other factories these papers become more and more artistic. Some of those we saw in summer clubs are illuminated at night. Others have split up into a number of "wall papers," one for the young workers, one for the educational department, one for the library patrons, and so on.

Many workers who contribute to these papers are likely to become correspondents for the regular trade union papers and journals, all of which have their workers' correspondence sections. *Goodok*, the railroad workers' daily, alone, receives on an average of 600 letters a day from its 20,000 worker contributors, and runs, for their benefit, a special journal of 40 pages, the circulation of which is 7,500. *Goodok* also has 10 special organizers who spend all their time on the road instructing these *rabkors*, as these correspondents are called, teaching them how to serve their paper. The workers' press in no other country has so large a staff

of voluntary writers as the Russian union press. However, after they become more regular correspondents and their style improves, the papers usually pay them something for their articles. This, of course, helps to maintain interest. These worker reporters are very sensitive reflectors of public opinion in the mills, mines and offices and help to keep union officials informed of what the workers actually feel and talk about in their daily lives. These writers in the shop are never restrained in their criticism, even though many of them are said to have suffered violence at the hands of local bureaucrats whom they have exposed. Some union periodicals have several thousand of these correspondents. The "*Voice of the Textile Workers*" has 2,000, the "*Voice of the Leather Workers*" over 2,000, the "*Mine Worker*" 1,390, the "*Metal Worker*" 1,250, *Batrak*, of the agricultural workers' union, 5,000, and the "*Building Worker*" 3,600. But, *Goodok*, with its 20,000 leads them all. It is estimated that there are about 250,000 *rabkors* in the whole U. S. S. R. including all who write for the wall papers, the union periodicals, and the general press.

UNION BOOKS

The book and pamphlet publication work of the unions is also important. In this field the railroad workers' union leads. For example, during nine months in 1926, this union published 3,776,400 copies of various books, most of them being novels and short stories for general reading. However, the larger sized books dealt with production and trade union problems. The publishing house of the C. C. T. U. has a slightly lower output of books, but they deal almost exclusively with

trade union subjects. The Educational Workers also have a large publishing house issuing works on educational subjects, as well as text books. The trades councils of Moscow and Leningrad, and the Trade Union Council of the Ukraine issue hundreds of volumes dealing mainly with some side of trade union life. A particularly large number of volumes from all these union publishing houses deal with the various educational activities of the unions, such as handbooks for circles and classes, manuals on club work, summer club work, mass excursions, workers' theatres, self-education, "how to increase your qualifications," library work, etc. Some typical titles are the following: "Art Work in Clubs," "Mass Hiking During the Summer," "Aids to Dramatic Circles," "Worker Correspondents' Schools," "Union Propaganda in Study Circles," "Materials for Active Readers," "Wall Newspapers." There are also scores of volumes on political, industrial, technical and trade union topics. Altogether, during the nine months mentioned, in 1926 over 10,000,000 copies of books were issued by all the union publishing houses in the Soviet Union. The books are sold at general bookstores in which the country abounds, as well as at the book stands in all union headquarters.

TOMSKY'S COMMENT

In his speeches on the educational work of the unions, M. Tomsy, the teacher and leader of the C. C. T. U., has made some very penetrating observations. Some of them are contained in a pamphlet from which we may summarize a few passages.⁴

⁴ M. Tomsy, *Cultural-educational Work of the Trade Unions*, 1927 (in Russian).

Tomsky first reminds his fellow-unionists how, when union culture work was first suggested in 1921 (there had been only sporadic lectures, concerts and entertainments during the hectic days of war Communism), many of the old-time revolutionary unionists "laughed at us." "Ironical smiles greeted us when we first talked about rest rooms, clubs, orchestras and choirs." But now these same workers participate in all this work and take it quite for granted, because they now see its great importance to the membership.

The work has been exceedingly difficult, because it has been so new; there has been little experience in other countries to draw from. German unions, for example, can show the Russians models of trade union book-keeping and systematic organization, but they had, at least up to 1921, done little in the cultural sphere which could be suggestive to the Russians. The work that the soviet unionists are doing was never before done on such a grand scale. They have had to experiment, make mistakes and blunder along by themselves.

When the work was first commenced, there was a great controversy as to whether it should concentrate on "education or recreation." Tomsky declares this argument was as foolish as an argument on the question, "Shall we eat or breathe?" He believes that the work must be well rounded and include both political education as well as recreation and rest in all their varying forms. The union activities have to compete with the beer halls and billiard rooms and so must give the worker a chance to express himself in a lively way. For this reason clubs must not bar dancing, to which some of the sterner and less realistic Communists had objected. An all-around recreational program is specially valuable in attracting into active union work the raw

village youth who knows no working class discipline and who brings with him to the factory town all the prejudices and superstitions of the countryside. The club is the place to begin to work on him, says Tomsky, and in this propaganda one must not forget the words of Lenin that "in trade union work the chief method is persuasion."

After a thorough criticism of some of the work done in the clubs, and after scoring some of the inadequate union publications, Tomsky concludes: "Considering what we have been up against, and comparing our work with that done in western European countries, we have something to be proud of." The foreigner in Russia will not be carried away by the factories, or the technique of the unions, or the collective agreements; but the sweep of the whole union activity, especially this titanic cultural-educational work, is bound to call forth his admiration. For in no other country is the whole social life of the worker built so consciously and successfully around the factory or his place of work.

And yet the workers of the Soviet Union have just begun this slow and difficult job. In the task of providing new and young trade union leadership, and in advancing tens of thousands of workers to teach and govern the country, they have a tremendous responsibility before them. That they will carry it out no one can doubt who has seen the soviet union members at work and at play.

CHAPTER XV

WOMEN AND YOUTH IN THE UNIONS

THE PLACE OF WOMEN

THERE are no special women's sections in the trade unions although women's meetings are occasionally called to strengthen the work among women, and efforts are being made to draw a larger number of them into the life and work of the organization. The fabkom usually has one of its number, almost always a woman, appointed to look after women's activities. Special lectures are given in the clubs, and rooms are provided for them to leave their babies when attending these. This attention from the union is, of course, in addition to the regular provision for the protection of women included in the social legislation of the country.¹

In April, 1926, about 25 percent of the entire union membership of the country was made up of women, the largest percentage being recorded among public health workers, educational workers, domestic and hotel workers, textile and garment workers. In the two and a half years preceding this date the female membership of all unions had increased by 768,000. However, the percentage of women remained approximately the same due to the increase in

¹ For a full description of these laws and the story of the sweeping changes that have come in women's life since the Revolution, see Jessica Smith's *Woman in Soviet Russia* in this series.

the number of male members during the same period.

Among members of factory and local committees the percentage of women for all unions was 18.5 on January 1, 1927. It ran as low as 4 percent in the local transport workers' union and as high as 48 percent among the committees of public health workers. The percentage has been increasing, but it is still about 7 percent below the ratio of female members in the unions. In some plants we visited in the textile industry we found women in command of the situation at the fabkom offices, being not only in a majority on the committee but also on all the subcommittees. Marie Simonova, an active worker and head of the subcommittee on the protection of labor, showed us over one large plant. She had worked here over twenty years, starting at the age of thirteen. She contrasted the treatment of girl apprentices in those days with their treatment now, when they have equal rights with men. She told us her ears were nearly torn off by the foreman when she was learning to operate a spinning frame. Such brutality would be unthinkable today—especially with Marie on the committee.

There has been a steady increase in women's activities in all those enterprises where special efforts have been made to enlist their interest and activity. For example, in a leading factory district in Moscow, the number of women workers on the factory committees jumped from 125 to 425 in one year, while the number on subcommittees increased from 350 to 844, and the number among factory delegates rose from 325 to 1,335. Women have been found to make exceptionally competent members of protection of labor subcommittees dealing with housing, cooperation, nurseries and hospitals. But they are also taking a steadily increas-

ing part in production committees as well as in educational committees.

Among the administrative personnel of provincial departments of unions, the percentage of women is lower than on the fabkoms, being only 15.5 percent in January, 1927. Particularly active women workers may be found among the domestic and hotel workers union, especially among such groups as the chambermaids in hotels. In a Moscow hotel we talked with the leader of the local committee, a non-party worker, who carries the scars she received when she was beaten and jailed by White Guards in 1920. Her only offense then was attempting to organize women workers. To-day she is the busy organizer and leader of a group of women unionists all of whom testify to great achievements gained through their collective activities.

One finds that among the "instructors" appointed by the C. C. T. U. some 40 out of 318 are women while more than 1,000 women hold responsible jobs with the C. C. T. U., the central committees of national unions and provincial inter-union organizations. In union club work women have been well represented. Reports to the Seventh Congress in 1926 showed that women comprised 33 percent of the membership of clubs, while on the boards of administration of clubs they represented 19 percent. On club sections and committees 30 percent were women. In the "circle work" of the clubs the percentage was still higher, 34.2 percent of the participants being women and girls. The largest number of women were interested in physical culture, library, dramatic and literary circles; but they were also well represented in those studying political problems and the trade union movement.

In technical classes and in trade schools connected

with factories, the number of women students has been steadily increasing. The women, of course, have equal rights with the men to enter all the trades from which they were banned before the revolution. In all factory trade schools of the country the percentage of girl students increased from about 13 percent in 1923 to 40 percent in 1927.

Due to the lower qualifications of women, however, the rate of unemployment among them has been much higher up to date than among male workers. About 16 percent of the women members of all the unions were unemployed in 1926. In some trades a higher percentage than this will be unemployed while at the same time scarcely any men will be out of jobs. For the same reason—the greater skill and training of the men—we find a larger percentage of women among the lower categories of wage payments. However, the increasing number taking the technical courses will tend to raise the wage standards of the women.

Another evidence of the growing participation of women in union life lies in the large number that are passing through the school of union activity and graduating into administrative-economic jobs in the industries. Trade union reports in 1923 show that of those who were promoted from the machine to the higher posts only 9.6 percent were women, while in 1926 the number of women increased to 22.3 percent. In the same year, of the workers promoted to jobs as foremen in the factories, 17.8 percent were women; while of those promoted to jobs as "brigadiers"—the foreman who teach young apprentices—20 percent were women. The number of directors and assistant directors of factories who come from the ranks of the women trade unionists has also been increasing.

One notices also in recent years an increase in the proportion of women union members who have been appointed by the unions to act as inspectors of factories and other institutions. They make specially good inspectors of worker's houses, rest homes, kindergartens, maternity homes and the like.

Considering the conditions of women in the old days, one must admit that tremendous changes have been wrought in their conditions and their status.² Formerly they were discriminated against and received lower wages than men for the same work. If they stayed away three or four days after confinement they were dismissed. Some of them, like the mothers in Passaic, gave birth to children at the machine. There were no nurseries, hospitals, special foods, night sanatoria, social insurance, communal kitchens. And if the woman worker in despair looked for help toward union organization, she was thrown out of her company house as a "fomenter of discontent" just as in the coal fields of Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio today. Now these miseries are but a memory, and the woman worker, protected by the laws of her State—the most advanced legislation of its kind in the world—stands shoulder to shoulder with man in the union and in the soviet.

THE YOUNG WORKER

Young workers may join the union as soon as they enter the factory for part time work, usually at the

² The report of the first trade union congress held in the Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic of Tadzhikistan in May, 1927, showed that many of the delegates from this non-industrial region were women who had only recently taken off the veil. And yet these women of diverse nationalities in the most remote parts of the Soviet Union seem to possess a conscious realization of the role they are playing in the new Russia and particularly in the young union movement.

age of sixteen. From then on they have voting rights in the union, and after eighteen they may hold any office.

Special efforts are made to attract young people to the union and to stimulate their active participation. The factory committee usually has a special member who directs youth work in the plant. Young people are encouraged to become members of subcommittees dealing with questions in which they are likely to be interested—the protection of young workers, athletics, dramatics and various educational activities.

In well organized factories, the clubs have what are known as youth sections, joined by workers up to twenty-three years of age, although from eighteen on, the worker, if he desires, can transfer to the grown-ups' section.

The work of the youth section is usually directed by a bureau elected by the young workers. Separate circles and classes are organized for them, such as those in politics, sports, and problems connected with the choosing of a vocation. "Youth Days" are arranged once a week when mass meetings and activities are carried on in the club. A special room is usually provided for the section, and club librarians stack their shelves with literature adapted to the needs of the young people of both sexes.

The results of all this youth work has been a steady growth in the number of those who serve on the local and factory committees. Between 15 and 20 percent of the "activists" are young workers under twenty-three. They have also played an increasingly important role in union congresses. Besides, they have had their own annual conferences called by the national unions as well as by the provincial trades councils.

The number of trade union members under eighteen is about 285,000. The largest number—about 60,000—is in the land and forest workers union, but the textile union counts about 40,000, while in this same union the number of workers under twenty-three is about 207,000 or 26 percent of the membership of the union. Of the 40,000 textile workers under eighteen, more than 18,000 are in factory technical schools, while the remainder are studying as group or individual apprentices under foremen and technical men.

Looking over the various lines of trade union work among the young, one sees that the soviet leaders regard the young workers much as they regard the specialists and engineers: as "the apple of the eye" of the whole public economy. They are considered as the future administrators of a cooperative society for which no door of advancement and opportunity should remain closed. The chance for the average young worker to demonstrate his talents for organization, to secure a well-rounded education, to train himself for advancement in his job is one of the most hopeful features of present-day Russia. The unions have as one of their major concerns, this nurturing of the young workers to be useful members in a socialist commonwealth.

STUDENT ORGANIZATION

The organization of students in universities, technical schools, workers' high schools and other institutions of learning, deserves a special word. The lowest organ of the trade union among the students is known as the trade union section. It is composed of not less than thirty students. They join the section of their trade or occupation, present or prospective depending on the

circumstances. For example, in an agricultural school, most of the workers will belong to the land and forest workers' union, but there may also be groups who come from the building trades, sugar industry, food industry or the miners. They retain membership in the union to which they already belong, for they are members of the union not as students but as workers in a given industry.

The student trade union organization is similar to that of workers in other enterprises and the members are entitled to all privileges usually obtained by unionists. There are the section committees, general membership meetings and delegates' meetings. The worker-students from the various unions represented elect an executive bureau for the whole student body. The subcommittees under this general intersection student committee are the cultural-education committee, the academic committee and the economic committee. The organization work is done by the chairman and secretary of the main bureau.

The highest body directing all the work of organizing students in the unions is called the Central Bureau of Proletarian Students of the C. C. T. U. This bureau is elected at an All-Union congress that meets once every two years. The bureau, itself, meets every two or three months, its current work being carried on by a presidium of nine, working under the C. C. T. U. It has a consulting voice in all the congresses and executive meetings of the C. C. T. U. and funds for its operation are furnished by that organization. It edits its own publications and periodicals, including its national organ, "*The Red Student*."

In all the provinces and territories of the Soviet Union, the student union organization ramifies under

the general direction of the regular union and inter-union organizations of these districts. Its officials are represented in certain governmental institutions, especially those dealing with education, and play an important role in the union movement generally. Through such organizations practically all the students in the country become lively and loyal unionists during their period at the university, workers' high school and technical school. In no country is the student body so completely integrated with the union movement. Altogether there are now about 340,000 students in the U. S. S. R., of whom seventy-three percent are members of trade unions.

CHAPTER XVI

UNEMPLOYMENT AND MUTUAL AID

PROTECTING THE UNEMPLOYED

ONE of the chief subsidiary tasks of the union is to protect its members against unemployment and to provide relief for those who are out of work. Along with the various forms of social insurance, over the extent and administration of which the unions exercise a commanding influence, Soviet Russia also provides a thorough system of state unemployment insurance. This, as well as the other branches of soviet social insurance, has been fully described in a number of recent books.¹ The unions, of course, participate with the Commissariat of Labor in the enforcement of this law, the operation of the public labor exchanges, and the payment of benefits. They do all they can to increase the amount of state relief. But they also have their own special obligations to protect their membership through several types of supplementary relief.

First, let us note the extent of unemployment in the Soviet Union. In the summer of 1927 slightly less than a million workers were registered at the labor exchanges. This number did not include all the unem-

¹ *Russia After Ten Years*, Report of American Trade Union Delegation to the Soviet Union, p. 45. For a thorough and recent discussion of unemployment see A. Katz, *Unemployment in the U.S.S.R. and the Struggle Against It* (Published by the Commission for Foreign Relations of the C.C.T.U. of the U.S.S.R., 1927). Cf. also *Social Insurance in the U.S.S.R.* by the same author, p. 28.

ployed throughout the country, as some small towns have no such registration offices. The percentage of all union members unemployed on April 1, 1927, was about 18 percent. It was particularly high among farm and forest hands, sugar workers, builders, water transport and local transport workers, all of these being highly seasonal trades. The Russian union authorities explain that every spring, during the slack period, and before work opens up, the largest number are registered as unemployed. The previous October (1926), there had been only 12.8 percent of union members out of work. The seasonal workers are employed only in the summer and fall, after which most of them return to their villages with their union books. In the spring, before the jobs open up, they register as unemployed. "We thus see," says the union statistician who gave us these figures, "that the number of unemployed among seasonal workers is not alarming. It is a normal feature under conditions of unusually quick growth of our national economy."

The unemployment among purely industrial workers, recorded in December, 1926, was about 9.5 percent, in spite of the fact that industry had developed both in 1925 and in 1926 rapidly enough to absorb all of the unemployed workers registered at the beginning of each year. We thus have the phenomenon of a great growth in industry accompanied by an increase in unemployment. The comparative improvement in the life of the city worker has drawn millions of workers to the cities. It is estimated that over 3,000,000 migrated in this direction in 1927. This influx of rural workers into urban centers accounts for the increase in unemployment. Another reason for the recent growth in the unemployed, is the fact that at the begin-

ning of 1927 industry and transport reached the pre-war level, and the process of absorbing workers into industry was somewhat slowed down after a rapid advance from 1924.

In addition to the chief factor in unemployment—the peasant worker from the village—another considerable element is made up of women who, according to Tom-sky, like their sisters in America, declare: “I prefer to work in a factory rather than to shut myself up in a kitchen.” Another element consists of those from the former middle and professional classes who have been forced to seek jobs as workers, and those who have been squeezed out of clerical posts with the recent “rationalization” of the governmental machinery, or some “regime of economy” campaign. Nearly half of the unemployed are without any qualifications or skill and unemployment among the skilled is declared to be almost negligible. Indeed, in some industries there is a dearth of really skilled workers. These statements are borne out by the fact that the greatest unemployment is in those unions with the largest number of seasonal or unskilled workers.

But whatever the causes, the unions have to meet the unemployment situation with concrete measures. Let us note, for example, what the metal workers do for their members. This union has a special unemployment fund into which are turned 20 percent of the receipts from membership dues. (In some unions special unemployment assessments are made for this fund.) In the first six months of 1927, it expended about \$1,000,000 for relief, which is more than six times as much as it was able to expend for this purpose during the entire year 1924. The amounts paid range from five to ten dollars a month, depending on the worker's standing

in the union. Married men receive extra relief. Payments are made both to those who benefit by the state insurance funds, as well as to those who are not yet eligible for relief under the insurance act. About 40 percent of this union's unemployed members received benefits from the union in 1926.

In addition to financial help, the union also organizes what are known as labor *collectives* (or *artels*)—a sort of cooperative labor association—where the unemployed are taken on for definite periods up to six months. Some of these productive organizations have 100 or more workers in them.

The union also organizes courses and schools to teach trades to its unskilled unemployed. And it sends workers to be trained at the Central Institute of Labor, which we have described. It also gives travelling assistance to workers desiring to go to other places to secure jobs where their services are needed. Railroad tickets and two weeks' relief is usually provided for these workers.

This union—and its practice is typical—assists the unemployed in various other ways. Of course, the collective agreements stipulate all workers shall be hired through the labor exchanges, and that union members shall be given employment first; and the factory committees see to it that the workers with families and dependents, or those most needing employment, are kept on the job in case discharges are to be made. Then the mutual aid society of the union grants loans to those out of work. Dues in the union are suspended during this period. Some unions, such as the Domestic and Hotel Workers, arrange for unemployed workers to take the places of regular workers on Sundays and rest

days. The same union organizes dining rooms where meals are served to the unemployed free, or at a low price. In their campaign against unemployment, the unions also keep down to the minimum the amount of overtime worked by their employed members. Then, through the government, they arrange for the organization of public works, such as railway construction, road building and land reclamation, as well as for more fundamental relief such as the organization of colonization schemes to attract peasants to unsettled parts of the country who would otherwise enter the labor market in the cities.

In spite of all these measures, the unions realize that the only permanent cure for the serious unemployment problem is the development of industry. The textile workers, for example, will only eliminate unemployment when new textile factories are built to turn out the needed goods, and to hire the unemployed workers. The more rapid development of production is the goal of the unions just as it is of the Soviet Government. This explains the great enthusiasm of the unions for the building up of industry in a country that has always been industrially backward and that is only now entering the period which it describes as "socialist construction."

In conclusion, the essential feature of soviet unemployment may again be stated. While in other countries unemployment denotes a certain stagnation in industry and is usually followed by a lowering of wages, in the Soviet Union an increase in unemployment has been accompanied by a rapid growth in industry, a steady increase in wages and a rising standard of living for the workers.

MUTUAL AID SOCIETIES

In addition to the various kinds of benefits that the workers of Russia receive through the state social insurance, they obtain certain supplementary benefits through their mutual aid societies. These organizations are organized by and under the general direction of the unions, but they are formally independent of them. They are open to the voluntary membership of all workers, non-union as well as union members being admitted. The chief purpose of these societies is to give small loans to their members, to provide means for collective purchasing, and also to accumulate funds for outright gifts to relieve members in distress.

I talked with the members of one of these societies in a small town in the Ukraine. I found that one of the seventy-five members of the society had borrowed \$50 from the society to finance himself and his wife on a trip to Moscow during their summer vacation. He was also cooperating with other members of the association in buying wholesale, and hence more cheaply, sugar, clothes, potatoes, wood and other necessities. Other workers told of small loans without interest which they had received from the society. Another told of being commissioned by members of his society to buy rubber coats for them in Moscow with money advanced from the fund. Another related how they had purchased one of the State lottery loans, had drawn the lucky number, and each of their members had thus won fifteen roubles. Still another told of a gift they had given to a blind girl, a member of the organization.

These stories provide sufficient illustration of the sort of work done by these societies which have been organized chiefly in the last three years. Today, about 40

percent of all trade union members belong to such mutual aid organizations, of which there are some 20,000 in the U. S. S. R.² The dues range from one half to one percent of the monthly wages, the amount being fixed at the general meeting of the society. These organizations are growing steadily both in resources and in the services provided for their members.

² I. Resnikov, *Trade Union Organisation in U. S. S. R.*, p. 59.

CHAPTER XVII

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

THE Russian unionists, including not only the leaders but a surprisingly large number of the rank and file, have a keen and absorbing interest in the condition and progress of the workers' movements in other countries. They seem to know vastly more than American or British workers about what is happening beyond their own borders. Their papers and journals, as we have seen, carry much material dealing with the struggles of the workers, not only in Europe and America, but also in the colonial countries and in the Far East. The "international situation" is on the agenda of the smallest trade union meeting or conference, and there are always local workers who can discuss it with insight and understanding. This sense of solidarity with foreign workers is undoubtedly stronger among Russian workers than among any large groups of organized workers anywhere in the world today.

All those who have talked with the Soviet unionists have been impressed with this world view, as well as with their sincere desire to establish closer relations with the workers of other countries. Not the least evidence of this is the fact that they have a standing committee on Foreign Relations, composed of twelve of the most important members of the presidium of the C. C. T. U. This committee is always busy showing delegations of

visiting trade unionists the Russian unions, factories and social institutions. On more than a hundred delegations, official and unofficial, from almost every country in the world, they have showered genuine Russian hospitality. As I write this, hundreds of these labor guests are cheering the triumphant celebrations of the Tenth Anniversary.

The Soviet unionists have been open and frank in their desire to have these visiting workers scrutinize every phase of their union movement, to criticize it, to offer suggestions, and to return home and tell nothing but the truth about it. They have never objected to such "interference" in their union affairs, for they consider their unions an integral part of the world trade union movement, and thus open to the inspection and the criticism of union men in every country. The Russians are anything but petty and provincial in their outlook on world trade union trends. They have, to be sure, their own point of view. But they seem to welcome open discussion, in which they are adepts in speaking, as they say, "over the heads" of the union leaders to the broad masses of the workers in other lands.

Because they are devout proletarian internationalists, and because they regard the unions in every country as part of a world-wide movement, they have repeatedly contributed to aid foreign workers in distress. For example, they gave approximately \$5,750,000 to the British coal miners during their long strike in 1926. This money, it cannot be too often repeated, was contributed voluntarily by the union workers of Russia, who assessed themselves anywhere from a quarter to a full day's wages, to help their embattled brothers in Britain. It did not come out of the treasury of the Soviet Government, or out of the funds of the Russian

Communist Party or the Communist International. The Russian unionists also gave large amounts of money to the workers of Norway, China, Germany, France, Sweden, Japan, India, Poland, Italy, Belgium, Jugo-Slavia and fully a dozen other countries where the workers were struggling for better conditions. When they were still fighting with the results of famine at home, they contributed 8,000 tons of grain to the worker victims of the French occupation of the Ruhr in 1923.

This extraordinary interest of the Russian workers in world affairs, and their frequent contributions to support the struggles of other workers, develops naturally out of their fundamental belief that the labor movement is the main force making for radical social changes in foreign capitalistic states. The Russian unions, as we have seen, are founded on the principles of the class struggle. They have done their thinking in terms of the great masses of workers not only in their own country but in the western and colonial countries as well. From the first days of the Revolution, the present leaders of the Russian unions attempted to establish ties with labor abroad. By radio and letter they tried to get in touch with the workers of other countries. Due to the blockade and interference of governments hostile to the Soviet power, and to the suspicion of the continental labor leaders, who seem to quake at the thought of Russia and the Russian revolution, their efforts met with little success up to 1920.

In that year the International Council of Trade and Industrial Unions was formed, the Russian unions being the initiators and leaders of the council. In 1921 its name was changed to the Red International of Labor Unions. Its headquarters were established in Moscow,

and its affiliations extended to more than a score of countries.¹

RELATIONS WITH "AMSTERDAM"

From its first days, this International (known as the *Profintern*), as well as its major affiliated body, the C. C. T. U., did all in its power to create a "united front" of world labor with the International Federation of Trade Unions, which has its office in Amsterdam, and which embraces about 13,000,000 workers in 23 countries. But these efforts were always blocked by the leaders of the I. F. of T. U. who have been implacable enemies of the Russian unions as well as the Soviet Republics. Neither have the separate industrial unions of Russia succeeded in joining the 27 international federations of separate trades and industries which are affiliated with the I. F. of T. U. Only the International Food and Drink Workers' Federation has admitted the Russian union of that trade to affiliation.

In spite of all the efforts for trade union unity that have been made by the Russian unions, and in spite of all the correspondence that has been exchanged, the leaders of the Amsterdam International have remained adamant to any appeal for solidarity. They have told the Russians that they can work with them only when they have affiliated unconditionally with Amsterdam, accepting in advance all its rules and regulations. The

¹ A discussion of the relation of the Russian unions and the R. I. L. U. to foreign unions appears in Chapter IX, "The Russian Trade Unions and the International Trade Union Movement," of *The Trade Union Movement in Soviet Russia*, issued in 1927 by the International Labour Office. It reflects the point of view of the International Federation of Trade Unions with which the International Labour Office is closely associated.

attitude of the Amsterdam leaders toward relations with the Russians was dramatically revealed by John Brown, the British secretary of the I. F. of T. U., at the Paris congress of that organization in the summer of 1927. He read a confidential letter which came into his possession during the Russian-Amsterdam unity negotiations of 1924. It was written by Jan Oudegeest, the senior secretary of the Amsterdam body, to Leon Jouhaux, secretary of the French General Confederation of Labor and vice-president of the I. F. of T. U. It showed the continental leaders plotting to defeat the very unity for which they were supposed to be striving. It contained this sentence: "Tomsky seems to desire to collaborate on a sincere basis; it is therefore time to attack him."² After a day's grilling by the British, Mr. Oudegeest admitted he had written the letter. This episode led to his resignation.

The Russians believe, in spite of all these schemes to prevent labor unity, that it can be achieved. They regard the labor movement as a united indissoluble whole, irrespective of national boundaries. They have repeatedly expressed their eagerness to participate in convening an international labor congress representing all groups of workers in the world regardless of their political or economic principles. The purpose of the Russians, and their attitude toward such a plan, was expressed by Losovsky, general-secretary of the R. I. L. U., in his remarks to the American Trade Union Delegation in Moscow on September 12, 1927. He said:

² *Nation*, Oct. 26, 1927, p. 462. The precise wording of the letter as reported to the 1927 British Trade Union Congress in the "International Section, General Council's report (Supplementary Statement)" was: "I send you herewith copy in French of the letter we have received from Tomsky. It was in very bad English. It appears to me to show a sincere desire on the part of the Russians to cooperate with us, and, therefore, it seems to me it is time we passed to the attack."

"In view of the situation where we observe a struggle going on between various groups inside the labor movement—the revolutionary wing and the reformist wing . . . what do we propose?

"First of all, we turn to workers everywhere, to trade union organizations of all shades of opinion, and we say: 'Today the capitalists everywhere are attacking the eight-hour day, wages, social insurance and living standards. Let us form a united front on this basis, i.e., let us jointly defend the shorter working day where it has been won. Let us fight for those elementary demands that every worker supports. Let us raise the standards in the backward and colonial countries.'

"Secondly, we say to all reformist organizations: 'You assert that the majority of the working class are with you. Let us verify this. Let us convene an International Congress on the basis of proportional representation, where labor organizations throughout the world will be represented, and let this congress form a new International.'

"Let this congress draw up the program of the new International, draw up the statutes, appoint its own executive body, and its place of meeting and thus we shall unite the labor movement throughout the world under one flag.

"Further, as there are workers of different shades of opinion, let us make it a condition that every tendency inside this International will have an opportunity to defend its own point of view, not splitting the united organization.

"Furthermore, we have expressed our agreement to dissolve the R. I. L. U. and have demanded that the Amsterdam International likewise dissolve

its organization as soon as the world unity congress would be convened and a single General Labor International formed."

This is the position of the Russian unions on the issue of world labor unity. This is the proposal that they have repeatedly put to the Amsterdam International and which has so far been rejected by that body.

THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN COUNCIL

In the course of their campaign for international unity, the Russians did bring about in 1925 the formation of what was known as the Anglo-Russian Joint Advisory Council. This followed the visit of the British Labor Delegation to the Soviet Union and its favorable report on conditions in that country. It came also as a result of the mass pressure exerted at home on the leaders of the British Trade Union Congress General Council.

The Russians did their utmost to make this a real committee operating against the threat of war on the Soviet Union, against the capitalist offensive against the workers in England and elsewhere, against the British shipment of arms and men to fight the workers and peasants of China, and against imperialism generally. They hoped, also, that this committee might be the preliminary step toward the calling of an unconditional conference with the Amsterdam International, looking toward the formation of such a united international as Losovsky describes in the statement from which we have just quoted. The Russians wanted this committee to be more than a mere "talking shop" as they put it, more than a formal gesture of unity. They made every effort to give its professions and resolutions some substance

and life during the General Strike in England in 1926. But their offers to help the strikers financially were rejected by the General Council of the British unions. Later, during the continued desperate struggle of the British miners, they could get the leaders of the General Council to do nothing in the way of joint help to the miners. Their proposal of an international levy and an embargo campaign was rejected. However, the miners' union of Britain did accept the financial help of the Russian unions. It was the largest amount of money ever given in the history of the labor movement by one group of workers to another group of workers in another country.

The Russians criticized the leaders of the General Council very harshly for their conduct during the General Strike, as well as their failure to take adequate steps to help the miners. The General Council, in turn, refused to take any steps to call the full Anglo-Russian Joint Advisory Council into session, unless individual Russian leaders would cease attacking them, and retract what they had said. This the Russians refused to do. They declared they had made no agreement to be silent in the face of what they considered to be the betrayal of the British workers by their leaders. They refused to regard either the General Strike or the miners' conflict as a purely "domestic" situation, not to be openly discussed in every country. This irreconcilable situation led to the destruction of the committee by the British.

The Anglo-Russian Council was smashed at the moment when it was most needed, when the British Conservative government had severed relations with the Soviet Government and when the forces of reaction in the British Empire were most hostile to the Soviets and were actually plotting war against them. The British

Government had denied visas to the Russian fraternal delegates to the Trade Union Congress at Edinburgh in September, 1927. The main reason given for the break by the British labor leaders was that they could not work with the Russians. The latter, they declared, had "interfered" in the British trade union movement by intolerantly criticizing its leaders. Furthermore, the Russians were quite "out of harmony with the methods and traditions of the British Trade Union Movement." This argument was accompanied by loud applause from the Tory press of Britain which had been clamoring for the break ever since the Joint Council had been formed.

Not one resolution had been passed at any meeting of British workers demanding the end of the Joint Council, but the General Council was unanimous in its feeling that it could no longer work with the Russian unions. The vote on the resolution to dissolve the Committee, presented to the Congress in Edinburgh, was 2,550,000 for, and 620,000 against. The National Union of Railwaymen was one of the influential unions voting against the dissolution. The miners refrained from voting. Following the congress, the act was condemned by trades and labor councils all over Britain. A fair number of the rank and file of British labor and the C. C. T. U., representing the workers of the Soviet Union, believe that this is only a temporary break in relations. As Dogadov, secretary of the Russian unions, said to us a few days after the rupture, "We will repair the links in the chain of solidarity binding us to the British proletariat."

We have remarked on the keen interest of the Russian workers in the way trade unions are organized in other lands. Like Russians generally, they manifest a

special curiosity about America. We may perhaps best describe this interest by setting down some of the questions they have asked American unionists who have come in contact with them in recent years.

Stop to talk with a worker in any plant or workers' club, and you will soon be surrounded by an eager group who want to know—"What percentage of American workers are organized? What power have the factory committees in the United States? Do the workers criticize the factory managers in open meetings and production conferences as we do here? What is this B. and O. plan? Have the union workers classes and libraries in the shop? Why don't they organize a Labor Party? What about your worker correspondents? Do they get fired from their jobs? Why do you have 'yellow dog' contracts and anti-picketing laws in a country that claims to be free and democratic? Are the Ford workers unionized? What kinds of social insurance have you? Do you mean to say you don't have a two weeks' vacation yearly with pay? Are your unions industrial? How much do they give to strikers and struggles in other countries? Do you have rest homes and night sanatoria for workers? Why do your union leaders expel the Communists?"

These are typical questions, asked sometimes quite naively, but always in the best of faith, by the rank and file of the Russian workers. Through them runs the thought that America, the land of marvelous mechanical development, somehow ought to have a correspondingly powerful, democratic, efficient and comprehensive system of unionism.

When we are forced to tell them that labor is not well organized in America, and that it is particularly defenseless in steel and other great corporate industries,

they cannot quite understand. When we tell them of the Passaic or Colorado police, and how union meetings are broken up in certain districts, and organizers arrested, and strikers evicted from their homes, and injunctions issued, and company unions flourishing—the older workers will say, “Yes, that’s like it was with us before 1917.” Then they continue with their endless questions about America. Underlying this unusual interest is the hope that some day the “cultured American worker,” as they call him, will organize in strong unions and answer the call to international labor unity.

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